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WHITE DWARF

ISSUE 89 MAY 1987

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We're giving away £2000 this issue. Well, sort of giving away £2000. On the centre pages you'll find the details of what has to be the biggest and best competition that *White Dwarf* has ever run. £2000 worth of Citadel Miniatures (the winner gets £1000 worth of models; four runner-up get £250 worth each) will almost certainly rupture a small pack elephant. But go on, have a go at the *Ravening Madness Giveaway*. You'll have to provide your own pack elephant to take the prize away though. And we *don't* want to hear about how the winner managed to balance the whole lot on the top of a Thrud...

And now for something completely different. Next issue, *White Dwarf* changes. It's our tenth birthday, after all, and a small celebration is in order. *Yippee!* That's enough for now.

Anyway, WD90 will be larger: an extra 16 pages of articles, features and adventures! Cool. That's 25% bigger than at the moment, and all of it about games, which has to be rather spiffy news, what?

The less spiffy news is that the cover price has to rise to £1.25. But, as I'm sure the statisticians among you will realise, 80 pages means you get a whole lot more magazine for your money - and who knows what extra bits we're going to be including in the future...

Mike Brunton

The Editor and publishers of *White Dwarf* would like to apologise unreservedly to Greg Costikyan and West End Games for the tone and content of remarks made in White Dwarf 87 concerning *The Price of Freedom*.

CONTENTS

Open Box 2
Rogue Trooper, Judge Dredd RPG, Traveller 2300 and more

Awesome Lies 6
Every word the purest truth... straight up, guv... honest

Critical Mass 8
Once upon a time there was a book, with *Dave Langford*

Thrud 11
Barbarism from the epitome of Good Taste, *Carl Critchlow*

Be Afraid... Be VERY Afraid... 12
EEEEK! Things to terrify in *Call of Cthulhu* from *Carl Sargent*

Do Troubleshooters Dream of Electronic Killer Sheep 18
Baa baa black sheep, have you any clones... by *Marcus Rowland*

Derek the Troll 22
Trolls have all the luck when drawn by *Lew Stringer*

On Ealden Bergen 26
'Robin Hood, Robin Hood, riding through the glen;
Robin Hood, Robin Hood, with his band of *Graham Staplehursts...*'

The Great Ravening Madness Giveaway Competition 32
Win £2000 worth of *Citadel Miniatures!* It's Easy!

Friends in High Places 34
And with such friends, who needs enemies?
Simon Nicholson explains

'Eavy Metal 40
Painting Miniatures The *Phil Lewis* Way

Onwards and Upwards 44
Graeme Davis explains character careers in
Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay

Illuminations 46
The art of *Brett Ewins*

Arcana or Errata? 52
I never wanted to be a barbarian anyway... criticisms
from *Allan Miles*

Letters 60
Pen and Sword in accord

Classifieds 62
All the small print you could want

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OPEN BOX

ROGUE TROOPER

Boardgame

Games Workshop £14.95
Available End May 1987

Rogue Trooper, a boardgame by Richard Halliwell, is based on the comic strip in the *2000AD* comic. Set on Nu-Earth, a world devastated by the war between the Norts and the Southers, the strip concerns the struggles of a Genetic Infantryman, the Rogue Trooper of the title. He is trying to discover and kill the traitor who sent his unit into a trap at the 'Quartz Zone Massacre'. As a Genetic Infantryman, Rogue is no ordinary soldier, but a bio-engineered fighter designed to live in the poisoned hell of Nu-Earth and win the war for the Southers...

Each player controls a Genetic Infantryman (which is represented on the board as a rather nice 25mm plastic figure). The object of the game is to be the first player to unmask and kill the traitor. At the start of the game, each player equips his GI and is allocated a number of *Bio-chips*. Helm, Gunnar and Bagman are an important part of the strip and equally important in the game. Basically, each GI has an implanted bio-chip which records his memories and personality. If a GI is killed the bio-chip can be removed and his experience and skills can live again, so the bio-chips handed out at the start are effectively 'NPCs' who give assorted combat bonuses. However, your GI also has his own bio-chip, which, once he's dead, can be picked up by another GI and plugged into a piece of equipment. You get the chance to live again - and go for a joint victory as someone else's Gunnar or Bagman! Dying does prevent you from winning a full victory, but it makes sure that all the players are involved until the last die roll rattles away...

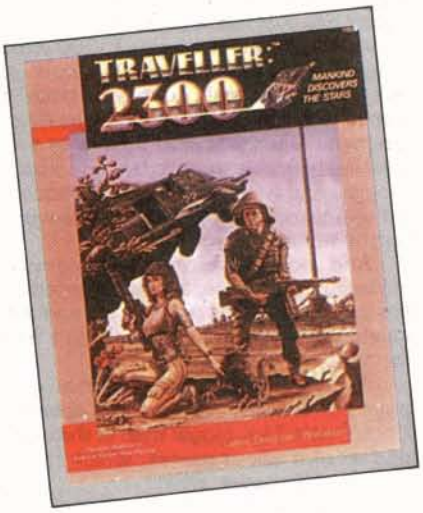
Play starts with each GI in a random drop (start) zone on the map (showing the whole of Nu-Earth and Milli-com), with a mission to complete. Each Mission card (only one of the 283 cards in the game) lists the type of mission and a location. Getting to the right place is half the battle, as virtually every area has encounters of one sort or another. Players can meet up with companions (the gorgeous Venus Bluegenes, for example) or find useful equipment, but more usually they will end up in a fight.

Once the mission is over, the player can draw a clue to the traitor's identity, and then it's off on another mission across Nu-Earth after the next piece of information. That assumes, of course, that another player doesn't play a Rogue card (a kind of joker in the pack) and stop you dead in your tracks on a particular mission. Eventually, though, players will have all the clues to the traitor's identity and then all they have to do is track him down and kill him. As the traitor is nearly as tough as the GIs, this isn't as easy as it sounds. He also has the disconcerting habit of escaping certain death just as someone catches up to him.

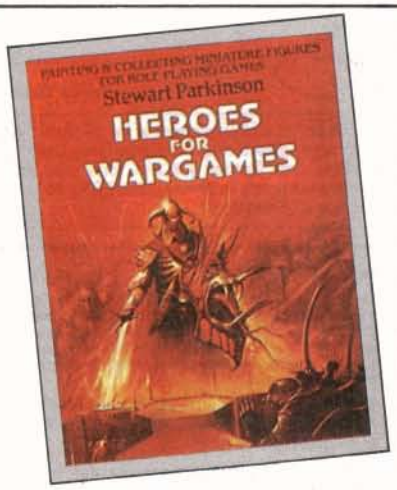
That, in essence, is the way the game works, but there are many more options in *Rogue Trooper*. The mix of encounter, mission and equipment cards allows the comic strip action to be mirrored in the game, even down to a player having to track down and marry one of another player's companions (such as the gorgeous Venus Bluegenes). *Rogue Trooper* is slightly more complicated than say, the *Judge Dredd* boardgame, it's fun, can be played to a finish in 2-3 hours and all the players are involved right up to the end. C'mon Gunnar, we've got a traitor to find...

Jervis Johnson

SLAUGHTER MARGIN
Judge Dredd Supplement
Games Workshop £9.95
Available End May 1987



TRAVELLER 2300
Roleplaying Game
GDW £15.00



HEROES FOR WARGAMES
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There's a lot in the **Slaughter Margin** box. It's certainly more than just a a single *Judge Dredd* adventure with a few floor plans.

The bulk of the package is the rather superior floorplans, which are a great improvement on those in the *Judge Dredd* rules. In all, *Slaughter Margin* has eight large sheets of floorplans and overlays which allow GMs to create several typical Mega-City 1 locations, along with scads H-wagons, prowl tanks, ambulances, riot foam vehicles - the whole works. Further, because the plans are geomorphic, they can be used again and again, not just for the series of adventures in the box. The whole effect is to make *Judge Dredd* very attractive on the tabletop, and it makes combat easier and quicker too.

The adventures come in nine progs, showing all the weird goings-on and the several major crimes that are in progress. Players are going to have trouble working out who is doing what, given some of the connections that are there to be made. The intention was to get away from the kind of linear plot that draws the players along in only one direction. And then there's these vengeance crazed types from Nip-Cit... But perhaps that's a red synthi-herring to throw you off the trail. There is, however, a lot of detective legwork for the players: nothing more than accurate shooting is just going to get them vaped.

There are also lots of player handouts to help the feel of *Slaughter Margin*: messages from the Sector House and Justice Department records on almost everyone in the case, guilty or innocent - but then, is anyone really innocent?

I wanted *Slaughter Margin* to be the kind of adventure which would capture the comic strip's movement. The floorplans allow players to adventure over huge chunks of the city, never repeating the same location twice. They also look excellent. Right, I'm off to finish off *Block Mania*, which makes this look like a Sunday School outing...

Richard Halliwell

In the wake of *Twilight 2000* comes **Traveller 2300**, GDW's new science fiction roleplaying game. *Traveller 2300* is not just an updating of the old *Traveller* system, but a continuation of *Twilight 2000*. The background explains how humanity has recovered from WW3 and colonised the stars. It is fairly detailed and makes somewhat tedious reading.

However, *Tr2300* has much to recommend it. The character generation system is a great improvement on original *Traveller*. Characters can now progress through their prior service careers without getting killed before the game starts; skills are gained in a controllable way, so it is possible to create a character without fiddling the dice; and characters may select services. The primary skills of a service are relatively easy to gain, secondary skills more difficult and general skills are very expensive.

The skill system is well designed and works very smoothly. To make their way in the universe, characters are called upon to complete various Tasks. These are rated according to various levels of difficulty. The character's skill modifies the chance of completing the task and the level of difficulty combine to show how long the job will take and whether or not a character succeeds. All in all, the system is neat and elegant. Unfortunately this is let down by the lack of an experience system. Even now (and after the experience system in *Twilight 2000*), GDW seem intent on characters' abilities staying the same. This is a great pity as it could have been grafted on to the system with no effort.

Combat is much more complete than in the original rules. It is, however, slow compared to the rest of the skill system. Great emphasis has been placed on hardware - there are enough weapons described here to satisfy even the most ardent gun nut. *Aliens* also seems to have been an inspiration behind the gun designs, as many of the illustrations testify.

Starship combat is not as good as it could have been. No doubt GDW decided they got it wrong in the past, but I prefer the old system. Space combat does not flow very well and is potentially very fiddly once the missiles start flying.

There is very little information on adventures. This was lacking in original *Traveller*, and ten years later nothing seems to have changed! This is also evident in the provided adventure: vast chunks are left for the GM to develop - a daunting task for most. And then there's the fact that this kind of cross-planetary chase has been done before by GDW...

On the plus side, *Tr2300*, has a lot going for it. The basic system is an improvement on the old, the animal encounter system is good, as are the tinkering with starships rules. On the other hand, in interstellar travel the game dives into the murky depths of multiple formulae calculator madness.

If you already play *Traveller*, there are some good ideas here, but the new game does not sit well with the old system (nor, to be fair, was it designed to do so). *Traveller 2300* is certainly more complete than *Traveller* and has a realistic flavour, but I would prefer simpler mechanics and a more exciting background. Still, these are early days and further supplements may well see *Traveller 2300* turn into a very full and rounded SF system.

Jim Bambra

Heroes For Wargames feels like a coffee table book. The impression is reinforced by the gentle wander through roleplaying games and fantasy wargaming at the start. Nothing startlingly new for *White Dwarf* readers here, but it does explain the hobby for beginners, grannies and the like. It has some utility, but the writer obviously expects that many picking up *Heroes* will be first timers attracted to the idea of miniature figures, and through them roleplaying games, by the profusion of photographs and artwork.

And it is all very attractive. Paper Tiger have done a very sumptuous production job. The photographs are sharp and clear, the artwork (much of it familiar to *White Dwarf* readers) an improving adjunct to the text. There are enough words to interest the casual reader and to give some real meat to the more knowledgeable: a coffee table book, but none the worse for that.

The sections on making figures - the concept sketches and production of miniatures - probably hold most interest for anyone who reads *White Dwarf*. The other particularly useful section is probably the one where 'Master Painters' talk about how they achieve their results. However, if you think of this as an extended series of *'Eavy Metals*, you've got the right idea about its subject matter and style.

This may not be the ultimate book on figure painting, but it'll do until the ultimate book turns up. *Heroes For Wargames* is probably ideal as a way of interesting someone in figures. A present for a younger brother, perhaps?

Mike Brunton

WYRDWORLD 2 - Wordesley Generic Adventure Strange Acorn Games £4.95

Wordesley follows on from *Wintersfarne*, reviewed in WD87. Physically, it's about the same - a 32-page A4 booklet with a card cover. The cover on this one is in colour, which is a welcome development, although the colour is somewhat wasted on the illustration. Inside, the adventure is typeset on a word-processor, with hand-drawn illuminated-manuscript-style letters at the beginning of each paragraph. Interior illustrations are sparser than in *Wintersfarne*, but maintain the quality-fanzine level of production.

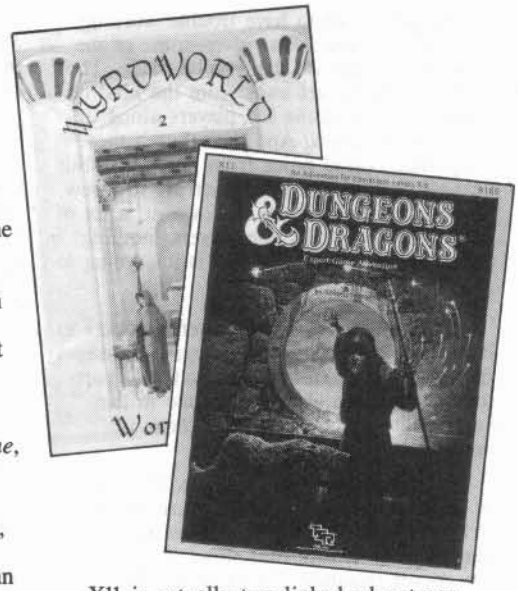
Wordesley is set in a town of that name, which is mapped with key locations described in reasonable detail. While not an artistic triumph, the town map is perfectly adequate, and the same can be said of the building plans. There are also two rather nice street and alley plans. The main thrust of the adventure concerns a stolen idol and an evil cult, and like *Wintersfarne* the accent is on thought, investigation and role-playing rather than open-the-door-kill-the-monster-count-the treasure. And as with *Wintersfarne*, the setting can be re-used in future adventures; obviously the GM will have to add detail as the players explore the town further, but the material in this adventure should give you a reasonable start. As the adventure is systemless, the GM will have to do a certain amount of preparation before it can be used, but an experienced GM will have no trouble and there are notes in the back of the booklet on using the adventure with *AD&D, RuneQuest* and *Rolemaster*. There are no difficult monsters to convert to whatever system you use, and there should be little fighting if the players handle things properly.

Not one for the hack-and-slay brigade, but like *Wintersfarne*, worth a look if you happen to like thoughtful investigative adventures with the accent on roleplaying and problem solving rather than all-action dungeon bashes. It's a shame about the price, which will put many people off, and the price is the only reservation I would have in recommending the *Wyrdworld* series to anyone - although I would think that you would get as much game time and enjoyment out of this small (but perfectly-formed) adventure as you would from many professionally-produced adventures on sale for the same price or more. If you see it in a shop, give it a look and decide for yourself. But *do* give it a look.

Graeme Davis

X11 - SAGA OF THE SHADOW LORD Expert D&D Adventure TSR Inc £7.50

Saga of the Shadow Lord is an Expert D&D adventure for levels 5-9. Physically, it is a 64-page booklet in a three-section wraparound cover, with maps and monster/NPC statistics on the inside of the cover and the middle 8 pages given over to more maps and eight pregenerated characters.



X11 is actually two linked adventures rather than one continuous one, making up a mini-campaign. The first instalment, *Elvenstar*, has Our Heroes trying to steal a magic item from the Shadow Lord in order to thwart his invasion of a peaceful neighbouring kingdom. It is designed in a very old-fashioned style, with a series of fixed but random-seeming encounters along the way to a dungeon where the serious business takes place. Without giving too much away, there is a village packed with adventurer-types (of up to 7th level!), and a Cloud Giant in the smallest castle I've ever seen (an *agoraphobic* Cloud Giant?), among other things. An interesting encounter with the Shadow Lord's army lightens the otherwise fairly uninspiring zoo-dungeon journey, until the adventurers reach the Shadow Lord's lair for the really serious dungeon-bashing. The final encounter has some good aspects, notably the way that the baddies' possible tactics are outlined and the notes for the DM on what to do next if the PCs win, lose, or miss the object of their quest.

The Halls of Drax Tallen, the second adventure, has the Shadow Lord returning, more powerful than ever, after his first brush with Our Heroes. His undead minions are searching for another magical item, which will give him immense power (hmmm, sounds familiar...), and the PCs are called upon to find it before he does. A re-run of the journey from the first part of the adventure then follows, with some additional encounters that are no more inspired than the first lot, and then it's into another dungeon for another final show-down. An appendix gives details of four new magic items and three new monsters - again, nothing staggeringly inventive or exciting.

If you like the style of D&D adventures as they were produced five years ago, then you will like this one. There is a simple plot, lots of encounters and plenty of action, all very firmly in the original tradition of the game. I was disappointed by it, as it gave me the impression that no developments had taken place in the hobby in the last few years, but it does what it sets out to do perfectly adequately, and if an action-packed, blood-and-thunder adventure without too much emphasis on plot and justification is your kind of thing, *Saga of the Shadow Lord* is worth looking at.

Graeme Davis

ARMADA Fantasy Board Game Jeux Descartes

Now, not a lot of people know this, but fantasy gaming is pretty big in France these days. They've translated most roleplaying games, they have good magazines. **Armada** shows they can publish their own board games, and ship them over here. For those as linguistically gifted as moi, the rules are printed in English-ish... and German too...

In the box - standard 'bookcase' format - you get a 7-piece jig-cut board (yes, seven), zillions of plastic bits in various colours - some with holes and some without - and twelve metal ships with exceedingly long masts onto which you can drop the plastic bits with holes. The board is sturdy and fairly bright, the bits make up in numbers what they lack in character. Reasonable value for money on the bits front.

Each player is boss of one of four maritime countries scattered in the corners of the board. You have three cities, seven provinces, a ship and fifteen armies with holes. Right in the middle of the ocean there's this big continent, with natives and gold. You take your hole-y army across the sea on your ship, explore the new world, find the gold (which you can take home on your ship, 'cause it's got holes as well), and shoot the natives (you can't take them back because they don't have holes, at least not until you arrive).

OK, you spotted it. It's another game about discovering America, disguised by a fantasy setting. Ships, armies, natives and gold - all the ingredients of the Conquistadors.

After this gushing build-up, you probably think I hate the game, right? Wellll... I thought I was going to, but it moves along very smartly, and some of the mechanics are very nicely balanced. You have ten actions in your turn: moving, fighting, exploring, etc. If you charge into a fight from the other side of the board, you have fewer turns in which to fight, and even fewer in which to ship gold back to a safe port.

This, and variable victory conditions, means you have to think about your tactics. Your ship is your major asset (you buy others with gold), and you need to protect it. However, if your troops guard the ship all the time, you'll never get any exploring done. Also, the natural victory condition to chase is one concerning capturing chunks of the new world; but don't forget the chance of winning by taking over four of the cities in other players' countries. Tough choices, and it makes the game relatively skilful.

I think the designers must have been a peaceable lot, because the simple tactic of jumping your opponent at the start of the game and nicking his ship was ignored. The advantage is with the attacker in even battles. If you lose your ship and you haven't any gold, you're 99% finished. You either need to play knowing this is a possibility (wrap those ships in cotton wool, me 'earties), or invent a house rule. Mine says reverse the results of the combat table so odds are with the defenders, or allow players to dice for gold at home. There are probably other solutions too.

Paul Cockburn

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AWESOME

L · I · E · S

Use the Force, Luke...

Yes, it's finally happened. Arguably the longest-awaited role playing game licence, **Star Wars**, has been obtained by West End Games, producers of *Paranoia*, *Ghostbusters* and the controversial *The Price of Freedom*. The Star Wars RPG is scheduled for release in the autumn - watch this spece for further developments.
Eeeeeeeyyowwwdakkadakkadakka...

Work in Progress

Owing to overwhelming demand, the **Blood Bowl Expansion Set** is under way, with new teams, enough extra counters for a complete Halfling team, expanded rules for intercept-ing, rules for magic, and a 'completely awesome' campaign system allowing you to build up your team through the course of a whole season. You get money for winning games, and with what you have left from paying your players and buying new ones, you can bribe the opposition and indulge in all manner of dirty tricks. Coach Jervis Johnson declined to comment on a release date.

Good Publicity...

It's easy enough to find people willing to write gamers off as cranks and devil-worshippers, so it's nice to find some good news. After last month's mention of an AD&D marathon in support of Childline, we hear that on March 1st, Heaton Role-Playing Club near Newcastle held a games auction, raising £100 for a local Mencap project. They didn't have to sacrifice a single chicken in the process... And then there's a D&D marathon game in Wolverhampton to benefit the PDSA. If you want to know more or help, call Mr I Taylor on (0902) 21200, any Sunday between 31 May and 21 June, 2-7pm.

... And Creeping Respectability?

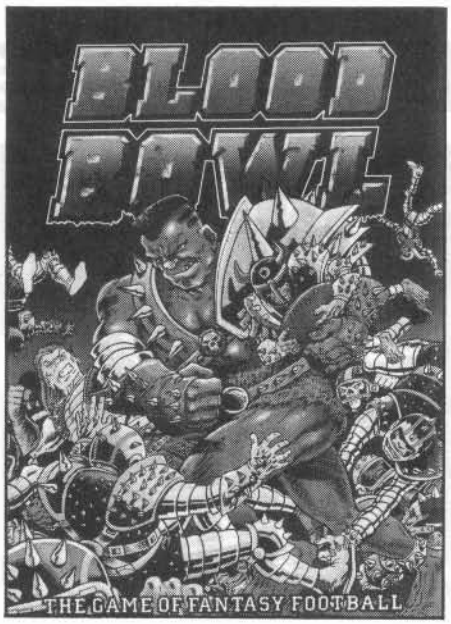
Word has reached the WD office that a body called the International Simulation and Gaming Association is holding a conference on *Simulation in Education and Training* in Venice on September 15th-18th. It's nice to know that someone realises that our hobby can be useful as well as fun, although the idea of distinguished academics from all over the world jumping up and down yelling 'I fireball the b*****d' in several languages is still somewhat beyond me. Still, I don't suppose it will be like that at all. Hmmm - Venice is lovely in the autumn; any chance of a couple of complimentary tickets?

Zap!

Following the item on *Lazer Tag* last month, we have received a cutting from an American local paper about *Photon*, a live-action setting which uses this kind of equipment. Thanks to Lt Col Lemon for the cutting. There are apparently 18 such 'facilities' in the US and Canada, and the price of the equip-ment being what it is, the only sensible way forward seems to be through commercial set-ups hiring the equipment out and providing the arena. How long, I wonder, before fantasy live-action games use a similar thing for determining spell effects? Or even a portable version of the electronic equipment used in competition fencing to determine melee hits? It must only be a matter of time.

Hi! This is Eddie, your shipboard computer...

GDW have released three computer programs for **Traveller**, for use on the Apple. **Trader** is a starship trading and exploration game, the **Traveller Word Generator** can apparently handle Aslan, Vargr, Droyne, Vilani, K'kree and Zhodani, among others, and the **Beastiary** (sic) seems to be a computerised version of *Animal Encounters*.



The Further Adventures of EGG

Since leaving TSR, Gary Gygax has formed New Infinities games with fellow ex-TSRers Frank Mentzer and Kim Mohan. Four **Gord the Rogue** books have been announced, continuing the the Greyhawk novels, while the **Grandmaster** series of game aids will apparently include four adventures and four 'Fantasy Role Playing Settings' - a town, a castle and so on. Also in the pipeline, according to NI Inc's literature, are a new rpg, **Cyborg Commando**, which sounds like *Twilight 2000* meets *The Terminator*, four boardgames by Tom 'Snits Revenge' Wham, and a monthly magazinel, **Realms of Adventure**, 'for the Adventure Gamer to support and enhance his total gaming experience'. Like, er, yeah...

Ramboland 1

Out in July, we are told, is the revised **Top Secret**, with two adventures and three sourcebooks before the end of the year, plus a linked series of gamebooks with tasteful titles like *Blast Out in Lebanon* and *Viet Rampage*. Seems they're trying to take the game out of the James Bond mould; the question must be whether this revision will be any more than the 'revisions' of *Boot Hill* and *Gamma World*.

Ramboland 2

Following the release of *The Price of Freedom* by West End Games, **FGU** have entered the arena with **Freedom Fighters**, in which the US is invaded by Russians, aliens, or anyone else you fancy. Also new from FGU is **Year of the Phoenix**, in which you are an astronaut plunged by a freak accident into a future where the US is invaded by the Russians... hang on, I'm getting deja vu...

Duelmaster Competition Winners

Not many of you had problems with the questions in this competition - first out of the hat were: **1sts** - *Richard Lindley, Clacks; Adam Baker, Chester;* and *Mark Harrison, Northampton* and **2nds** - *S Malam, Black-heath, London; G M Swanney, Cleethorpes; Alec Morton, Paisley; Steve James, Edgbaston, Birmingham; S Caucutt, Rayners Lane, Middx; Steve Wilson, Billericay, Essex;* and *C Jeal & A Peek, Derby.*
Thanks to Transworld for providing the prizes.

Blood Bowl Competition Winners

Well, I hope you're satisfied. It was only a few days ago that coach Jervis 'the Microwave' Johnson finally dug his way gibbering from the mountain of entries. He's only allowed visitors for a few minutes a day now, and he starts screaming whenever anyone mentions the competition. You can imagine the fun and games we had getting the results out of him.
Some of the entries were very funny indeed, but we can't print *them*, so here are some others: the Slann Francisco Slimers (featuring the Gorgeous Eunuch Cheerleaders), the Mordor Maniacs, the Centaur Forwards (*groan*), the Bad News Taxidermists... I could go on, but what have you done to me. Anyway, without further ado, here are the winners, Bob...

1st - *Simon Whiteley, Charfield, Glos;* **2nds** - *N Richardson, Leigh, Surrey; S Stamp, Barton-Upon-Humber; Graham Lloyd, Birmingham; Toby Dukes, Hebden Bridge; Pete Coombs, Newcastle-Under-Lyme;* **Runners-up**: *Nic Tall, Kenilworth; Karl D'Mello, Battersea; Sean Harte, Middlesborough; Matthew Bowen, Newport; David Groves, Sedbury, Gwent; Kevin Murphy, Durham; Woody Macdonald, Cambridge; J Siegfried, Vienna; Neil Landsell, Norwich; Justin Ives, London; Syan Tapp, Worthing; Simon Bowen, Southport; Matthew Barnes, Plymouth; Christopher Bailey, Holt, Norfolk; Simon Halford, Kidderminster; Ross Styles, Cambridge; Daniel Grant, Harlow;* and *JP Weston, Reading.*

RuneQuest Takeaways...

Psssst! Yes, you! You look like a RuneQuest player to me. You are? Great. Come over here then, into the shadows, and listen very carefully...
How would you like a *FREE* pad of *RuneQuest II Character Sheets*? You see, the Gnomes of Workshop have found some lurking at the back of the warehouse. This is very nice for the Gnomes, and even nicer for you... 'Why?' I hear you cry. Simple. If you want a pad of RuneQuest II Character Sheets you can have one for the price of a large SSAE (with 48p postage). Stocks are very limited and this giveaway has to be on a first come first served basis. It's probably a good idea to include an extra SSAE so that we can send back your 48p envelope if you're not one of the first...

And Finally... the 'News'

D&D: *XI2 Skarda's Mirror, IM2 The Wrath of Olympus, CM8 The Endless Stair, M4 Five Coins for a Kingdom*, all adventures. **AD&D**: *Ill Needle, Il2 The Egg of the Phoenix*, adventures; *C6 The Official RPGA Tournament Handbook*.
MERP: *Havens of Gondor*, campaign module; *Pirates of Pelargir, Sea-Lords of Gondor, Gates of Mordor*, adventures; *Robin Hood*, supplement for *MERP, Rolemaster* and *Fantasy Hero*.
Traveller: *Darrians*, alien module.
Traveller 2300: *Energy Curve, Kafer Dawn, Beanstalk*, adventures.
Twilight 2000: *Spanish Main* adventure (with souped-up pirate ship).
BattleTech: *The Succession Wars*, a boardgame 'mixing elements of such classic games as Diplomacy, Risk, Monopoly, and Axis & Allies'; *BattleForce*, robots in mass combat; *The Galtor Campaign, House Kurita, DropShips* and *The Mercenary's Handbook*, sourcepacks.
Star Trek: revised *Klingons* and *Trader Captains and Merchant Princes*, sourcepacks; *The Strider Incident*, adventure; *Orions, Orion Ship Recognition Manual* and *Star Fleet Intelligence Manual*, sourcepacks.

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The Enemy Within is the definitive guide to the mighty Empire of the Old World - with background information on its history, geography, politics and religions - and contains the first adventure in ***The Enemy Within*** campaign series: **Mistaken Identity.** Also in the package are an A1 colour map of the western part of The Empire, plus 8 pages of player handouts and ready reference information.

Shadows over Bögenhafen is the second adventure pack for **Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay,** continuing the campaign started in **The Enemy Within**. It comes complete with an A2 colour map and gazetteer of the market town of Bögenhafen. An accident at the annual market and fair of the Schaffenfest leads to evidence of a dangerous cult within the town, with pawns at the highest levels. The consummation of an evil plan draws ever nearer - can the adventurers save the town?

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CRITICAL MASS

A regular book review column, written by Dave Langford

SHOW & TELL

Sometimes I receive stories from hopeful authors who don't realise that my influence on *Dwarf* policy is equivalent to King Canute's on the tide. Send fiction to Ye Editor instead: he, unlike me, has limitless free time to read it [*Ha - Ed*]. Assuming your masterpiece passes the space test (wide margins, double-spaced lines... and remember that not putting spaces after commas etc will brand you as one of the damned) and isn't unbelievably clumsy in spelling, syntax or diction, the editorial comments are likely to involve such litcrit jargon as: 'Show, not tell.'

The point is that an SF/fantasy author usually needs to convey the background of an invented cosmos. Clumsy authors simply *tell* you by bringing the story to a shuddering halt for a lecture starting 'Twenty years ago, the ships of the Federation had...' and taking 2000 words to explain that (say) everyone's nose is now internally tattooed with a bar-code ID by order of fiendish DHSS galactic overlords. Less clumsy authors skip the lecture and, as part of the action, *show* you someone at the supermarket checkout, worrying about catching 'flu from the bar-code reader which has already been up 500 noses that morning. Every rule of thumb has exceptions. If you can write a scene-setting essay as good as that opening Bester's *Tiger! Tiger!*... go right ahead.

In **Cuckoo's Egg** (Methuen 319pp £2.50), C J Cherryh is initially telling very little. Thorn, an evidently human boy, is reared in isolation by a humanoid called Duun, furry, clawed and scarred, wielder of some mysterious authority. The master-pupil relationship is the core of the book, and very nicely done. Duun is training Thorn as a *batani*, something involving physical and mental ordeals, and games of bluff: 'There's a pebble in the pot' translates as 'Symbolically I've poisoned your food, har har.' The *batani* are impressive, but as aliens they're very much off-the-peg... Zen warriors with fur. Even their Guild HQ has interior decor suspiciously like the Sand Garden at Kyoto. Why is Thorn the only human on this world? The final revelations entail some background 'telling', but by then Cherryh's worked hard to make you *want* the answer to each riddle. A good read.

Frederik Pohl's **The Coming of the Quantum Cats** (Gollancz 243pp £9.95) also employs the show-not-tell technique of throwing you in at the deep end. It opens in a 1983 America where prices and interest rates seem curiously low; beer is illegal; one can lose one's thumbs for shoplifting; Arab interests dominate the country's finance... There are many skewed Americas in this novel of interacting parallel Earths, given a veneer of intellectual respectability by 'Many-Worlds' quantum theory and the uncertain status of Schrödinger's cat: hence the title, a bit twee for a classy and straightforward SF thriller. 'Real' people appear: in one America, Reagan is a forgotten actor; in another he's First Gentleman alongside President Nancy. Militaristic Americas invade peaceful ones with a view to behind-the-scenes assault on parallel Russias. I could predict the ending: with an infinity of worlds, any required *deus ex machina* just has to be out there somewhere! But Pohl, a reliably thoughtful author, goes one better than his semi-happy finale. As with nuclear wea-pons, the crosstime technology can't be uninvented, while there's an infinity of potential new inventors...

I'm afraid Jack Williamson's **Lifeburst** (Sphere 271pp £2.95) begins with wodges of potted history, explaining how the 22nd century's space-dwelling elite have sunspots tattooed on their cheeks as badges of superiority. Easy to fake, you think? Someone tries. The tattoo... peels off. Williamson has been publishing SF in the pulp tradition since 1928: his style has improved a bit over the decades, but his plots still involve utterly invincible threats (here a giant, nuclear-powered, ship-eating, space insect) countered by incredible last-ditch weapons (courtesy of friendly aliens). Crazed megalomaniacs command space-dreadnoughts and kick-start the plot by opening fire on peaceful contact ships. A brilliant scientist works alone to develop the first fusion reactor, which is carried around in a cardboard box. Black holes lurch coincidentally towards the Solar System, sucking up loose plot threads like a cosmic Hoover. No character in this farrago comes to life except, briefly, the giant space insect herself - who should have known that with the odds a billion to one in her favour, there was just no way in pulp SF that she could win. This book will take you right back, probably to before you were born.

One time-honoured solution to the background problem is to drop an ignorant visitor into your future society: he'll naturally ask questions after being told 'You have slept exactly one hundred and thirteen years, three months, and eleven days' (Edward Bellamy, *Looking Back*, 1888). **Sun's End** by Richard Lupoff (Grafton 348pp £2.95) adds extra fillips. The hero has been rebuilt into a bionic superman by the time he wakes in 2089, 80 years after his accident. He's also the richest man in the Solar System (cf Wells' *When the Sleeper Wakes*, 1899), and for no apparent reason develops telepathic powers. But though life is good in space colonies, it's grim and slummy on Earth, where the stormy Sun will erase life in mere centuries. One slim hope is offered by evidence of super-aliens on Mercury (traces only), Titan (traces only, but there's a jolly good race to get there before the devilish Russkies) and Zimarzla. The last is a new, extra-solar planet into which our hero plunges in a final ecstatic, cosmic light-show (cf *2001*). And, well, that's it. Lupoff poses a problem: how to save 26 billion people from dying as the Sun overheats? He and his hero simply turn their backs on the question. Thumbs-down to both of them.

With **Princess of Flames** by Ru Emerson (Unicorn 327pp £2.95) normal fantasy service is resumed, right down to the routine enthusiastic plug from Anne McCaffrey. Decadent King Sedry and his vile brother Hyrcan are fighting the unspeakable Fegez hordes, little knowing that among the allies lurks sister Elfrid, the Bastard Princess, waiting to revenge the overthrow of their father King Lear (not his actual name, but the mad scenes were awfully reminiscent). The villains come to a sticky ends and the princess gets her man. References to holograms, nicotine and coffee help weigh the story down to earth: indeed, it's curiously unfantastic fantasy. The smelly Fegez do some half-hearted shape-shifting, and upper-class characters glow with royalist auras or emit kingly fire (lending ambiguity to lines like 'a curse that blistered the air') but none of this seems vital to the tale. It's as though Emerson had written a novel of semi-historical warfare and was advised to 'fantasy it up a bit'.

Privateers by Ben Bova (Methuen 383pp £2.50) offers 21st-century US/USSR space-skirmishing with a heavy propaganda message and, to quote an American critic, '21 worn-out adventure-fiction clichés in the first 4 pages!' **Ghost Train** by Stephen Lawes (Sphere 343pp £2.95) is another horror nasty: 'Loathsome. An unspeakable abomination. A horror buried so deep in his psyche he can remember not a single detail of what has been done to him. He stands in the railway station and shudders uncontrollably.' I've felt that way myself after British Rail bacon sandwiches. **The Black Ship** by Christopher Rowley (Century 310pp £10.95) looks like entertaining SF but is volume 2 of a trilogy, and I haven't seen volume 1 - sorry, Century... **The Dragon Lord** by Peter Morwood (Century 318pp £10.95) was reviewed here in paperback but is now reissued for rich readers who found that edition too cheap.

Finally, **Brute! Classified Pulp Nasties** (Sphere 141pp £1.95) 'is to Literature as the demented abstractions of New York subway graffiti is to Art' (publicity flyer, *sic*). Scanning these very short stories (eg 18 words) in very large print with very many exclamation marks (the 18-worder uses 21), I decided the analogy wasn't quite right. In fact this work is to Literature as a pool of vomit outside a pub is to Haute Cuisine.

Dave Langford

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Ravening Hordes will form the basis for the proposed **Warhammer League** and **National Championships**, arrangements for which are already underway.

Ravening Hordes, by Richard Halliwell, will be available in April, as a perfect-bound, 72 page book, containing a host of new ideas for the Warhammer Fantasy Battle Rules. It will be copiously illustrated — including colour — clearly laid out, essential for all Warhammer Battle Players and an absolute bargain at only £4.95.

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THRUD THE BARBARIAN MEETS THE HEAVY METAL HATCHET HEADZ

©CARL CRAMPTON '87 JUST FOR JOHN...

Be Afraid Be Very AFRAID

Phobias in *Call Of Cthulhu*

by Carl Sargent

Illustrated by Dave Carson

'Hideous, slavering tongues, slicking around my legs... drooling, obscene mouths, gibbering, hot with slime. The snickering of many mouths, the dribbling of snake-like tongues. Aiiiieeee!!'

'Yes, yes, Mr Smith. I understand that you have been through some kind of traumatic experience. By just what has this to do with you being afraid of driving gloves?'

Phobias play an important part in *Call of Cthulhu*, and most intrepid investigators should develop at least one major psychological quirk during their careers. Phobias will appear as a result of temporary insanity and are frequently found even in the permanently insane.

To make the most of phobias, therefore, keepers should be looking to develop personality disorders as a result of what their investigators experience. It is clear, as urged in the *CoC* rulebook and in many of Lovecraft's own tales, that the form of phobias should reflect the forms and/or principles of the Mythos horrors which drove the afflicted person insane. In other words, whatever it was that the poor investigator experienced ought to be a major part in the phobia he or she develops.

The *CoC* rulebook and *Companion* (recently printed together in a hardback format) list many phobias, but keepers can always do with more. What is fear of slime called, a phobia relevant to Cthulhu if ever there was one? What is fear of solitude? The *Cthulhu Companion* claims that it is monophobia, but it's wrong, since this is fear of one *thing*. So, seeing as I know a little bit about phobias, and since I have developed three or four as a result of dealing with *White Dwarf* editors, this article reveals many useful secrets for keepers to introduce. If your players have read everything in the book about phobias, surprise them with a few of these. Most of them have been selected because of their obvious relevance to *Call of Cthulhu*, but one or two are included because they're rather odd, and one at least because it's very silly. In fact, let's start with the silly one...

ALEKTOROPHOBIA

Fear of Chickens

I kid you not. We all know that chickens are Shantak birds hiding inside chicken suits, don't we? All that stuff with clucking and laying eggs is just a front. Chickens are heavy duty. You should always blow them away on the off-chance.

AMYCHOPHOBIA

Fear of Being Scratched

Things have claws. Things scratch you with that nameless, unspeakable inner resonance that means your soul is lost to the Great Old Ones or one of the many clawed, scratching abominations of the Mythos. A scratch is an intimation of the nature of damnation. Autoamychophobia means you'd sooner feel that itch for the rest of your life than scratch it yourself... But then, what if it *isn't* an itch?

BATRACHOPHOBIA

Fear of Reptiles

Cold-blooded creatures seem to have an obvious affinity with all sorts of creeping, oozing horrors like Serpent People and Hunting Horrors and even more unimaginable scaly, cold, eldritch creatures with huge teeth and forked tongues and vast humanophagic appetites. Even garden lizards, stupidly dismissed as harmless by most fools, are watching, watching...

BLENNOPHOBIA

Fear of Slime

Show me a Cthulhu campaign that won't benefit from the introduction of this one! Everything in the Mythos is slimy (well, almost everything). And it won't stop with slime; viscous oils, jellies, the signs of the passage of Mythos creatures are everywhere. To make this playable, it might be restricted to organic slimes like the horrible mess you get in the oven tray after roasting a Shantak bird - sorry, I mean chicken, of course.

CARNOPHOBIA

Fear of Meat

How can you be certain where this stuff comes from? Butchers look at you in such an odd way... they're almost

certainly cultists, and if meat is what you fear it could be, can ghouls be far behind? Or worse? The possibilities are too horrible to contemplate.

CNIDOPHOBIA

Fear of Stings

Stings are ovipositors; they may lay eggs. Inside you. You may not even feel it, since the stinger may have its own local anaesthetic. All you will know is the final few seconds of mind-numbing shock as the ghastly spawn erupt from your innards, uttering a gutteral ululation. Watch out for unexpected weight gain - the developing larvae are absorbing nutrients within you - or watch for weight loss as they drain your vital fluids away. Be afraid of anything, but be especially afraid of stingers, wet and barbed and chitinous and glistening. Squeeeek.

CREMNOPHOBIA

Fear of Precipices

This is to simple vertigo what malaria is to car sickness. The sheer drop below a precipice... it's too potently symbolic. It's not a question of wondering what's down there, and whether it will come for you. You *know* what's down there, and that it *will* come unless you fall down and grab hold of the ledge, hold it tight, and no way are you moving from here... The simple thought of the possibility of a precipice is enough to paralyze you.

EISOPTROPHOBIA

Fear of Mirrors

The most ghastly thought is not simply that mirrors might show you how things really are. It is not enough that your ageing, and those odd marks of foul origin, should be revealed. Nor is it only that those around you who maintain some illusion of normality to cloak their true, monstrous, nature might have that nature revealed as you take a look at them in the true-seeing lens. No, the horror goes deeper than this. It is the progressive changes which are so terrible. Each day shows the horrors of reality more and more clearly, and this raises the obvious question: are the abominations you see degenerate with each passing day actually deteriorating, or is it that the brooding mirror chooses only to reveal the full horror of things at its own chosen rate?

EREMOPHOBIA

Fear of Solitude

Being alone is the most terrifying thing in the world. By definition, there is no help to be had, no source of comfort, no-one to share adversity and fellow-feeling with. It is impossible, intolerable, to be alone. Because something will come, and then you'll wish you really *were* alone. In the quiet of solitude there will be a rustling or a slithering or the sounds of movement of some obscene mass, approaching with the implicit promise that you will never be alone again. Because you will never be *anything* again...

ERGASIOPHOBIA

Fear of Surgery

Doctors are mad; this ought to be obvious to anyone. They have many years of intensive study which puts them under severe stress. And they are learned men and they read books. Dangerous books, perhaps. Worst of all, they are interested in medicine, and that means life, life-forces... It's obvious we're talking serious Mythos involvement here. So, doctors are sick, dangerous fanatics and surgery is the worst thing of all because you are anaesthetized and helpless as they perform their profane operations and extract God knows what fluids and organs from you or insert some slithering, licking obscenity... You know the feeling, you're helpless but not insentient. Everyone knows someone who has had out-of-the-body-experiences during surgery, who have been helpless but aware, railing impotently at the dreadful acts of the demented medics. Surgery? Death is infinitely preferable.

HAPHEPHOBIA

Fear of Being Touched

If it can touch you, it can eat you, infect you, flay your skin away, and/or cover you with acidic paralyzing slime which will slowly eat your flesh away. And those are just the easily-imagined possibilities. Of all the senses, touch is undoubtedly the most disgusting, because it is so primal, so primitive, just like the undifferentiated blobs of protoplasm, the Spawn of the Deep Ones, reaching out with their blind, mindless, touch... Squirmmmmmmmm.

HELMINTHOPHOBIA

Fear of Worms

And not just dholes either. The smaller ones are their spies, seeking out prey in their seemingly mindless way. Worms, more than anything, epitomize the most foetid Mythos horrors, not least the haunters of tombs where worms feed, ghouls prowl, and nightmares are conjured up. Above all, worms are at their most truly disgusting when they move; that limbless, squeezing-and-squelching, writhing motion... Think how that feels on sensitive skin; think how it will feel when you discover that the worms' best-hidden secret is their tiny but ultimately fully destructive teeth.

HOMICHLOPHOBIA

Fear of Fog

More dreadful by far than darkness. In darkness there is at least the mercy of surprise and a sudden death. But in the fog, terrors loom. They slowly emerge, every noisome detail of their membranous forms forcing itself into an atrocious awareness on the victim's part. Vaporous blasphemies materialize from the mucus gloom and slowly enmesh victims, stifling their screams with suffocatingly wet embraces. Fog is not a pleasant business.

ICHTHYOPHOBIA

Fear of Fish

Enough said. Fish come from the deeps. So do many other things, and we know exactly what they're like... don't even think about them. Dread, noisome things are hauled up in fishing nets. And even ordinary, dead fish sometimes look at you in a certain way... they *know*. They have seen your future. You'd better start writing your autobiography now, because you don't have long left. Fish are old, old beyond reckoning, and they know abominable secrets.

LYSSOPHOBIA

Fear of Insanity

Fear of losing one's mind is to some extent universal and fairly rational, but there is a difference between a rational

Fear and a phobia which dominates much of a person's waking life. The lyssophobe is obsessed by insanity, terrified of it. Are you going mad? Perhaps you are... how would you know? And what are you going to do about it when it happens? I don't see how you can go on being an Investigator.

A variant problem would be to modify this phobia to be a fear of asylums. This is even more rational than a fear of madness today. In the 1930s with the prospect of lobotomies, primitive shock treatments and real snake-pit conditions.

ODONTOPHOBIA

Fear of Teeth

Teeth bite and inject venom. There are some which are sharp for rending flesh and there are some which are blunt for chewing flesh. Some are barbed and snagged and some drip ichorous fluids which digest or paralyze or inflict pains beyond knowing. Above all, monsters have teeth and they frequently use them even when no provocation is offered. You cannot negotiate with teeth operating at full speed. Disembodied teeth, perhaps still attached to some necrotic, gulping gullet, are the worst. They can appear at any time, anywhere...

OMMATOPHOBIA

Fear of Eyes

You can be seen. There is nowhere to hide. Flee wherever you choose, but the divinational eyes will always seek you out. At first, you will only notice occasional, unusual gazes, eyes which look the other way when you turn, the one person in a hundred who gives the game away... But as you grow to realize the universality of their sadistic scrutinies, you will see also that what appeared at first to be merely physical organs, were actually point-projections of an idiotic, blasphemous, all-seeing awareness. The eyes have it after all...

PHTHIRIOPHOBIA

Fear of Parasites

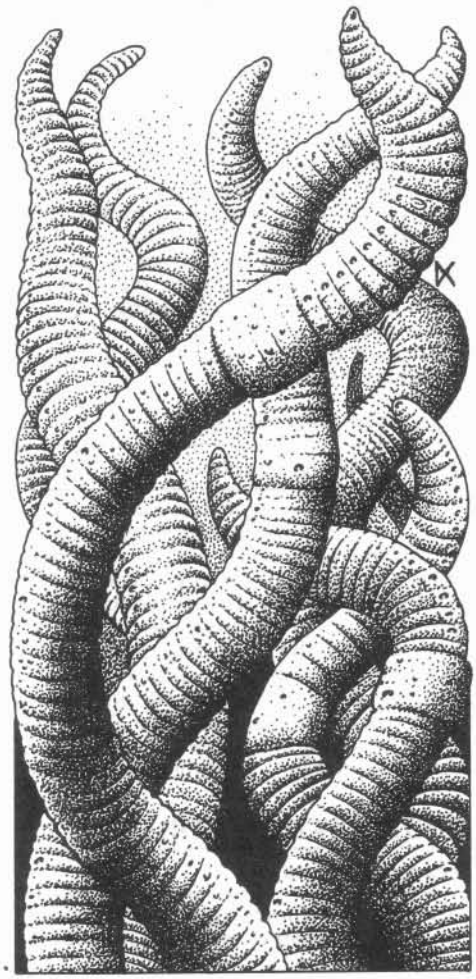
Parasites invade the body, so a phthiriophobic shares some concerns with cnidophobics (see above). But parasites are worse, for they will remain with you and sap your stamina, reducing you to a shell but not permitting you the relief of death until they find a better host. And that will be someone close to you, someone you spend much time with, someone you love... Your last image as the Thing forces its' way up your gagging throat and explodes in a bloody shower is the frozen scream on your loved one's face as the parasite takes up residence in its' new home, arcing in a crimson spiral as it closes in relentlessly.

Yeeughh.

PNIGEROPHOBIA

Fear of Smothering

Few ways of dying are exactly fun, but smothering - being unable to breathe as some gibbering, slime-covered unmentionable occludes your nose and mouth - that is horrible beyond endurance. You know it is worse than anything else you can imagine (and you brood on this a lot), because of the arcane knowledge the Horrors have of pneuma. Pneuma, wind and breath, is soul and spirit. By trapping your breath and your dying shriek inside you, the dread nameless ones *trap your soul*. They may feast on that for all eternity. Smothering is the promise of an endless dying, shrieking on and on throughout aeons.



POGONAPHOBIA

Fear of Beards

Men with beards have three outstanding attributes. First, they are fanatics, possibly cultists and almost certainly mad. Sec-ond, they are sexual deviants of one sort or another. Finally, they read lots of books, generally the sort of books which should not be read. This combination makes them dangerous (especially if you're a female investigator). Beware of men with beards. They are knowledgeable, dangerous, and mad.

SCIOPHOBIA

Fear of Shadows

The vampire, a terrifying thing to many, is greatly feared. Quite rightly too, if you know what I mean. And what clue did this unholy demon reveal, to show that it was not delivered of any nature we know of? It cast no shadow. A terrible, unnatural creature with an equally unnatural lifeless attribute. But, far more than dreading the creature which casts no shadow, the sciophobe knows that there exist an even more ultimate horror of gibbering and eldritch illusion - *The Shadow Where There Is No Creature...*

SIDERODROMOPHOBIA

Fear of Railways

And not just BR's Killer Staph'n'Kidney pies either. This is fairly odd, but tunnels and embankments add to a theme of claustrophobia, and everyone knows you can't escape from a speeding train. However, taking everything into account, the Buffet is still probably the best bet as the place for some seething, nameless horror to appear.

SIDEROPHOBIA

Fear of Stars

Even someone with only nominal Mythos knowledge knows where the Outer Gods and almost all the Great Old Ones came from, and the nature and names of at least a few of the monstrosities which make their way between the nightmare worlds in the firmament. A starlit night is a window on the true horror of existence. Stars are abomination factories.

TAPHOPHOBIA

Fear of Graves

Let's face it, going anywhere near a grave is suicidal. Even assuming that the grave hasn't got an Undead occupant, you're sure to find a bunch of demented cultists armed to the teeth with firearms and summoning spells, or else a flock of ghouls who are going home from the pub and fancy a quick takeaway. If you get really lucky and avoid all of this, the grave will contain some awful item which will blow your SAN to bits or else a book (which is much the same thing). Graves make you shiver. Fear is a man's best friend, here.

TRISKAIDEKAPHOBIA

Fear of Having Thirteen At Table

The Apocalypse. Should you ever be one of Thirteen to table, the storm will draw in, lightning will flash and thunder roar, and the very fabric of the heavens will be torn asunder as Old Ones materialize. Numinous chanting will grow to unbearable volumes as the Deep Ones surface, and the End of the World will definitely be nigh. Your own fate, of course, will be *especially* appalling...

One last note if you want to go totally over the top on phobias. A fear of *everything* is not, as *CoC* claims, pantophobia. That, of course, is the fear of having to attend dreadfully boring theatrical events in December or January. Pan-, or Pano-, phobia is the correct term.

Carl Sargent

1 Hey, we're a game!

3 What's goin' on, Rogue?

- *Helm's right, guys. Games Workshop's made a Rogue Trooper boardgame. Now anyone can go to Nu-Earth with us.*

2 Well, ain't that cosy!

- *There's a board of Nu-Earth and Milli-com, with en-counter cards...*

2 Yeeeha! Blow 'em away!

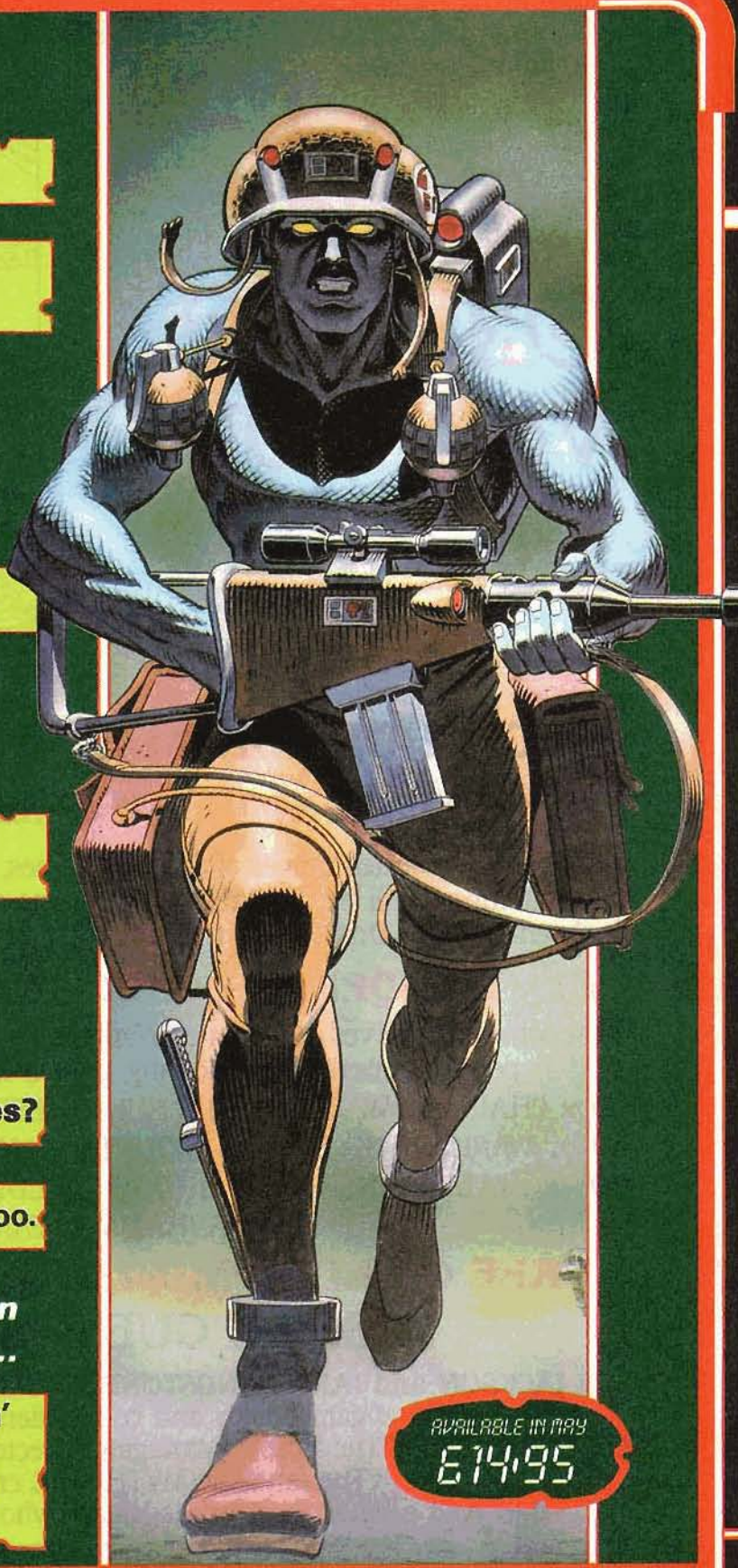
- *Synth out, Gunnar. As well as Norts, we can meet useful companions...*

1 Like Venus Bluegenes?

3 Yeah, yeah. K. for Ken, too.

- *...And as we go, we pick up clues until we can run the Traitor to ground...*

2 So what're we waitin' for? C'mon, Rogue, quit yappin' and let's get goin'!



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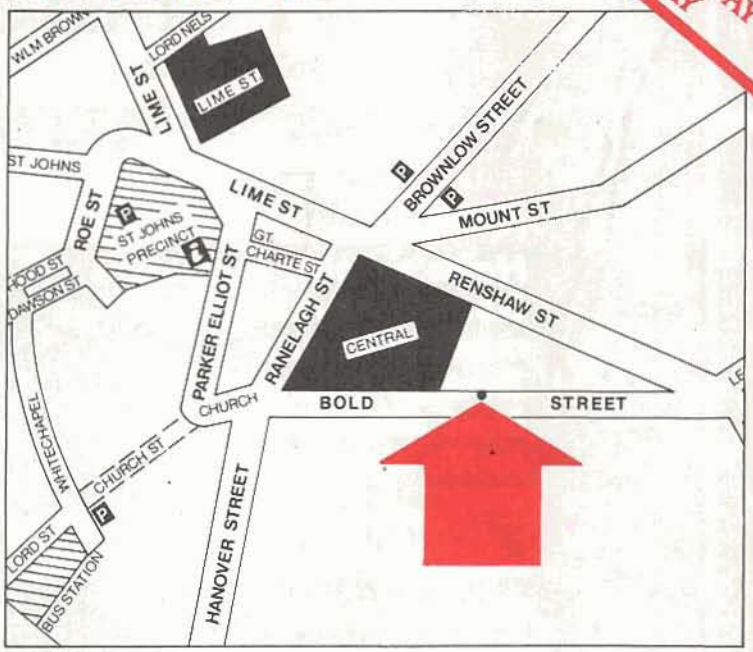

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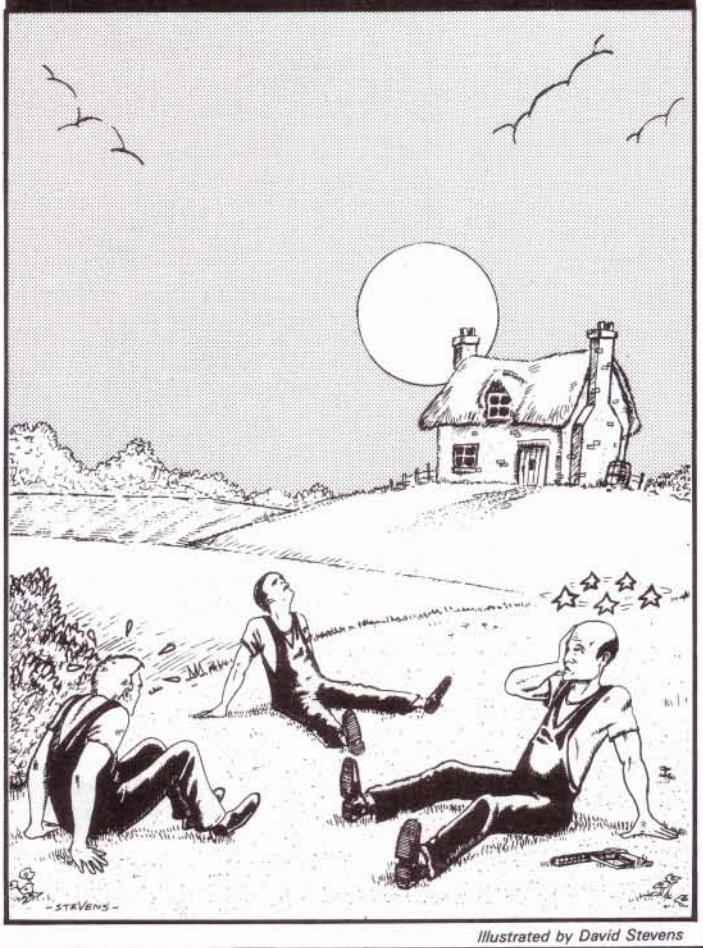


Illustrated by David Stevens

Once Upon A Time...

There was a High Programmer named Past-U-RAL-4. An important man, of course, being a High Programmer, but then you'd worked that out for yourselves hadn't you? Why do we struggling writers bother... Back to the plot:

Past-U-RAL is still about, and a nature freak to boot. He is a former member of the Sierra Club whose first step on the ladder of success was (naturally) to turn in all the members of his cell as traitors. He did it with a tear in his eye, for he really loves the idea of the Great Outdoors. Any *normal* High Programmer with such a love of nature would probably establish a base Outside. Not Past-U-RAL, but then, this being *Paranoia*, that would be too simple by far. There's also the minor problem that Past-U-RAL is allergic to pollen, fur, feathers, real sunlight, and natural foods.

Rather than abandon his dream completely, Past-U-RAL has built his idyllic homestead-away-from-home in a disused warehouse under the Alpha Complex. Start humming Beethoven's Sixth now. The Computer has 'forgotten' this area. Carefully and traitorously misdirected resources have produced a landscaped floor surfaced with plastic grass, a convincing hologram 'sky' and 'landscape', a thatched cottage with robot servants, and a flock of 120 robot sheep. He lives here whenever possible, sometimes with guests who generally belong to the Earth Mother secret society (See *Acute Paranoia* for details).

While Past-U-RAL would love to spend all his time in his cottage, every now and then he has to spend a few days working with his friend, and yours (and mine, of course), The Computer.

However, his tranquil existence has been shattered. Stop humming Beethoven's Sixth. When Past-U-RAL returned from work yesterday he was horrified to find his servants deactivated, and one literally torn apart. And five of his sheep had been destroyed. None of the surviving servants could give a coherent (coherent, in this game - *HA!*) account of what had happened. All said that they blacked out. The sheepbots are standard petbot mechanisms (programs Baaa-1, Pretend to Graze-1, Produce Synthetic Droppings-1), and can't answer questions.

Past-U-RAL made two decisions:

1: He's leaving the cottage, and not going back until the mystery is solved. Something that can tear a robot apart can do unspeakably terminal things to a High Programmer. He has an ordinary (and that means very secure) apartment elsewhere in Alpha Complex.

2: Someone else can solve the mystery. Guess who...

Lies, All Lies

Brief the team about a mission to the sewers. Make this sound as disgusting, repellent and confusing as possible. *Plumber's Helper* in *Acute Paranoia* is confusing, nauseating and repellent, but that's close enough. Equip the Troubleshooters with every possible device that might be used in a sewer, plus a few that are ludicrously inappropriate: dinner jackets and armoured spats? Jet boots? Parachutes? Automatic open-on-scream parachutes? If (that's an optional 'if') you're feeling mean some of the last lot have been sabotaged by Commie Mutant Traitor Scum, and are open-on-whisper or open-on-ppphizzzt (laser shot, stupid) parachutes. Neat, eh? Send a few Vultures to intimidate, sorry, escort, the team to the sewer entrance. Send a few Warbots and Blue Int-Sec troopers to escort the escort. Kill anyone who objects.

As the Troubleshooters are frog-marched down the final tunnel towards the sewer, it fills with white mist. Everyone collapses: escorts, escorts' escorts, any spare guards who happen to be about, Troubleshooters, and robots. Mutants go down as well, no matter what their brand of pervo-mutation.

Remember *The Prisoner*? The Troubleshooters wake up on a grassy lawn near a charming thatched cottage, under a clear blue sky. The sky and landscape seem to stretch out forever. Faint baaa-ing noises can be heard from the far side of the hill. Describe all this in terms apropriate to Troubleshooters who may have never seen the sky, grass, hills, cottages, or sheep. Remember that The Computer has forgotten about this area. At the moment the Troubleshooters aren't being monitored for traitorous utterances and behaviour. Well, not by the Computer, anyway... Internal Security agents are all around. I mean, do you trust anybody these days?

Anyone who has never been Outside should now make a sanity roll. Anyone who has been Outside before should eventually realise that there's something wrong. The air doesn't smell clean enough, the sunlight isn't as hot as it should be, and the grass is made of

plastic. The Troubleshooters will also discover that all weapons and equipment, apart from laser pistols, melee weapons, and open-on-whatever parachutes have disappeared.

While the team are beginning to absorb this information, the sky is rent in twain. Remember, it's a hologram and Past-U-RAL is a High Programmer. A huge hand, fifty or so metres long, appears through a black 'tear' in the sky, swathed in clouds that cloak it as a white garment. It points down at the team. A booming voice says 'Go Thou and Guard My Sheep, My House, and My Servants. Thou Shalt Safeguard Them, Even At Risk Of Thine Own Lives, Or Thou Shalt Answer Unto Me. And Mighty Shalt Be Mine Displeasure!'. Anyone who answers back, fires weapons, or asks any questions is struck by lightning. Very traditional, but satisfying, all the same, n'est pas? Use damage column 15 and chuckle a lot. Actually, it's a plasma pulse from a ceiling mounted projector that retracts behind a thick steel plate when it isn't in use, but knowing that somehow takes the romance away.

The hand withdraws into the sky, which neatly closes again. A bot appears over the brow of the hill, says 'This way, please', and leads the way into the cottage.

The Green, Green Grass of Home

The warehouse is 'only' 300x400m, with a 15m high ceiling, but it gives the impression of having limitless horizons. Anyone walking far enough in any direction will eventually walk through the 'horizon' and into a wall. The walls and ceiling are covered in acoustic tiles which deaden echoes and muffle out the faint sounds of the Alpha Complex. A 'lake' in one corner seems to be kilometres across, but only a small portion actually exists. It is only 15cm deep. You might be interested to know that you can seriously drown (yourself or someone else) in 15cm of water.

Two tunnels leave the warehouse behind the holograms. One leads deeper underground, and has been blocked by a roof fall, the other runs into a maze of tunnels, and ultimately leads into the sewers. Both tunnels are barred by huge blast doors.

At several points holograms conceal roof pillars. Anyone looking at a pillar sees a recorded image of the lawn and 'horizon' beyond it, but won't see anything which moves behind it, such as a sheepbot. It's easy to spot the pillars themselves once you know they are there.

Past-U-RAL has built an impressive cottage on a low hill in the middle of the warehouse. A simulated-wood veneer plastic sign identifies it as 'Rose Cottage'. There are master and guest bedrooms, with bathrooms, a big lounge and recreation area, a gymnasium, a kitchen and servants quarters.

All the rooms are luxuriously furnished in white, with white-on-white decorations. All rooms are fitted with concealed cameras and microphones, linked to Past-U-RAL's desk console. Most Troubleshooters will have difficulty identifying the furnishings, since they are totally unlike normal Alpha Complex fittings. For example, the main bedroom has a water bed with satin sheets, the recreation area has a bar and a jacuzzi, and all floors are carpeted. The kitchen contains 'real' foods for Past-U-RAL's occasional guests, and treated synthetics which lack the normal sex suppressant drugs.

There's nothing of any great significance in the cottage, apart from the body of a robot at the bottom of the jacuzzi pool (its brain and left arm have been ripped from the torso) and various items of contraband.

If the Troubleshooters examine the cottage closely they will discover that the chimney stack is made of concrete while the other walls are made of lightweight foamed plastic blocks painted to look like bricks and timber beams. The thatched roof is also fragile plastic. The walls can be destroyed by a blow, and bullets and laser beams won't find them much of a barrier. Let the Troubleshooters find this out for themselves later on. They'll thank you for the pleasure that this discovery will bring.

The chimney stack conceals a lift (entered through a secret door in the lounge) and a delivery chute. The lift is Past-U-RAL's route to his office. Needless to say, (so why I am bothering to tell you?) the lift has been raised and the shaft is guarded by automatic lasers. The delivery chute is part of the Alpha complex automated supply system; if a clone is killed a unconcious replacement will eventually be delivered to the kitchen.

Right, back to the plot (again). The robot in the pool was MEL/0RS-340, the shepherd and handyman. There are three other robot servants, all standard humanoid types:

JEE/V-ES-229 is the butler. Its programming includes an Aged Retainer personality module: 'You rang, sir?' and other similar phrases are a major part of its conversation. JEE/V-ES has impressive range of domestic skills. However, it's an incredible snob, and will do its best to keep Troubleshooters off the furniture, out of the pool, etc. It can generally be found in the lounge area or kitchen, or recharging in the servants quarters. It has a tray of standard Alpha Complex foods ready to serve to the Troubleshooters in the servants' quarters.

HUD/S-ON-321 is cook and housekeeper. Its personality module is a Lovable Rustic Cook. It has a strange accent and often misuses words. Its optical sensors have been malfunctioning since the attack on MEL/O-RS-34, and it will assume that anything delivered via the service chute is food and should be put into the freezer. This includes clones. It spends its time in the kitchen and servants quarters. It won't give the Troubleshooters precious natural foods, but it believes in 'proper' helpings of synthetics.

FIF/I-FI-433 is housemaid and bodyguard. It has a French Maid personality, with an Amazon Warrior backup. Two polychrome ROYGBIV lasers are built into its torso. Its programming includes Laser-6, Melee-6, and Cleaning-3. It may be found anywhere in the cottage. FIF/I-FI will throw out anyone stealing anything from the cottage, or kill anyone doing anything that might harm Past-U-RAL.

If the Troubleshooters question the robots they'll be told nothing. All of the robots collapsed, were reactivated by 'The Master' and then discovered MEL/O-RS-340 in the pool. The Master noticed that sheep had been destroyed, told the robots to expect the Troubleshooters and left. The robots won't reveal any information about The Master. Anyone who makes obvious efforts to discover his identity, or does unnecessary damage, will be struck by lightning (OK, plasma pulse, but it's more fun as lightning, isn't it?) the next time they leave the cottage.

By now the 'sky' is getting dark, and JEE-V-ES-229 gets out some lanterns and strange metal poles with hooked ends. This is the equipment the Troubleshooters need them to watch the sheep. If anyone attacks the sheep or the household robots without provocation before 'nightfall' the lightning will strike again. During the 'night', however, Past-U-RAL can only see what's happening in the circle of light around each lantern.

Allow the Troubleshooters to spend a few uneventful hours watching and counting sheep. Make Endurance rolls every so often, to avoid falling asleep on the job, then start the fun, sorry, attacks. After this, you'll never trust a lamb chop again.

The (Mint) Sauce of the Problem

By now you should be ready to decide what's been happening. There are three main options.

Wolfbots in Sheep's Clothing

Three killer robots built by a rival High Programmer have entered the warehouse. The killers are cunningly disguised as sheepbots, but are actually fast, extremely strong, and well-armoured warbots, with electronic jammers which affect other robots (as ECM shells). They aren't particularly clever and are programmed to attack humans. MEL/0-RS-340 was sufficiently humanoid to fool one. There's only so much brain you can stuff into a petbot-sized warbot. Grrrrr.

Make these robots as dangerous as you like. They will try to lure one Troubleshooter away from the others, then attack. Maintain ignorance and fear by refusing to describe the attackers until someone actually survives an attack. Since they'll usually go for the throat, a victim won't be able to say very much... One of the robots is malfunctioning slightly - it will attack sheepbots if it can't find a human victim.

After each attack the killers retreat to the lake, to wash off blood stains, then return to the flock. Their movements are concealed in the general roaming of the flock. Baaa.

Continue the attacks until someone works out what's happening. Then attack the clever little dicks with all three warbots. Serves them right.

The Company of Wolfbots

Something strange has happened to the sheepbots. Their minds have somehow fused to form a group consciousness, and they have decided to eliminate all disgusting organic lifeforms. Mint sauce eaters, the lot of 'em. MEL/0-RS-340 spotted that something was up and was destroyed as a result. The five destroyed sheepbots didn't merge with the group mind, and were dealt with because the flock didn't trust them.

If this option is used the petbots will make group attacks. For example, one or two would manoeuvre behind a Troubleshooter to trip him up, then others would jump on top and start to tear him apart with their little feet and strong teeth, or crush him by sheer weight of

numbers. All that bleating and looking helpless is just a front. As in the first option, don't describe the attackers until someone survives, then make multiple attacks on the entire group.

The sheepbots are small, unarmoured and as a group they have 45% melee skill. If all the sheepbots concentrate they can generate a strong ECM field. The mental link will collapse when eighty or more sheep have been destroyed. Optionally, the group mind can increase in power to take over the other bots, as described below.

The Butler Did It

This is a bit obvious for *Paranoia*, which means that the players will think of it first. However, because this is *Paranoia* they will dismiss the idea as too obvious which means you can use it anyway. But then they know that the obvious is never what it seems. You know that they know. Look, just consider this alternative and damn the logic...

One of the domestic robots has Gone Frankenstein and is responsible for the attacks, which were practice for attacks on humans. An ECM jammer is concealed somewhere in the servants quarters. The killer robot is shielded and immune and has a concealed data cartridge containing Laser Pistol-7 and Melee-7 programs.

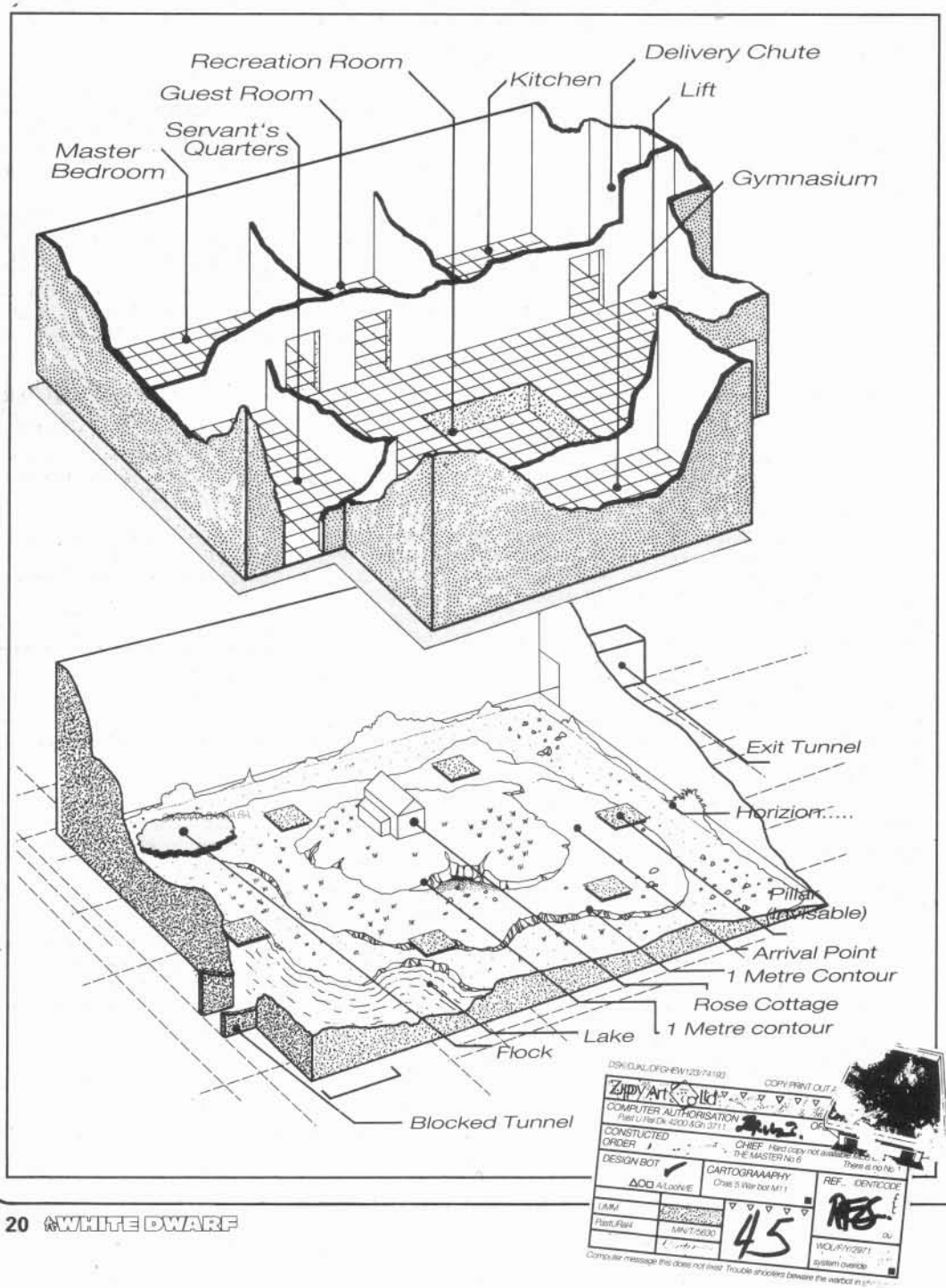
If the killer is JEE/V-ES-229 it will use a steel bowler hat as a frisbee-like weapon (*a la* Oddjob), plus karate-style melee attacks.

If the killer is HUD/S-ON-321, the preferred weapons are cooking knives and cleavers and, for the really ghoulish, large mincing machines. 'Accidents' with clones are nothing of the sort, and the optical sensors are in perfect condition.

If the killer is FIF/I-FI-433 it will try to avoid using its lasers, preferring a strangling wire (stylish, but not terribly French) and other melee attacks.

Optionally, all the robots have Gone Frankenstein. One altered the circuits of the other domestics, and gave them copies of its secret programs. They killed MEL/O-RS-340 because it didn't want to join them. They are lying about the deactivation.

The killer or killers will put on human clothing for the attacks, and should only be described when someone has survived an attack.



In the Bleat of the Night

Keep the identity of the attacker(s) secret for as long as possible. Start things quietly, and build towards a big end with clones dropping like flies (or even sheep ticks). You'll enjoy it more that way. So will the players, although you may not think it to look at them. Drive the Troubleshooters back towards the cottage. Let them barricade the doors and windows. Send the attackers in through those flimsy plastic walls. Reveal that the killer is already inside the building. Then give the Troubleshooters the bad news.

When Past-U-RAL has identified the killer(s) he'll take whatever action seems necessary. Necessary means sending in a few really big warbots to pacify Rose Cottage. These warbots are fairly stupid, and will probably account for several Troubleshooters during the clean-up operations. Why bother stuffing a brain into a warbot-sized warbot? Don't let the Troubleshooters escape through the entrance used by the warbots.

We'll Bleat Again...

As the survivors survey the wreckage, the sky is rent in twain again. A huge eye stares down at the team, and a rumbling voice conducts a more or less standard debriefing. All traitors are given short but dramatic missions as lightning conductors. When Past-U-RAL is sure that he knows exactly what happened, the Troubleshooters are given the white-mist-and-wake-up treatment. This time they have been stripped naked and are floating gently downstream in a rubber raft in one of the main Alpha Complex sewers. The Computer demands a mission status report (even sewers have terminals for The Computer).

Since they won't have accomplished their official mission, the Troubleshooters should be executed as traitors. Pathetic attempts to escape by describing an imaginary cottage may make The Computer decide that the team have been driven insane and should be sent for reindoctrination and routine therapy instead. Any gibbering wrecks that survive this ordeal should be sent back to the sewers to complete the mission as they should have done in the first place. Thank you for co-operation.

Marcus Rowland

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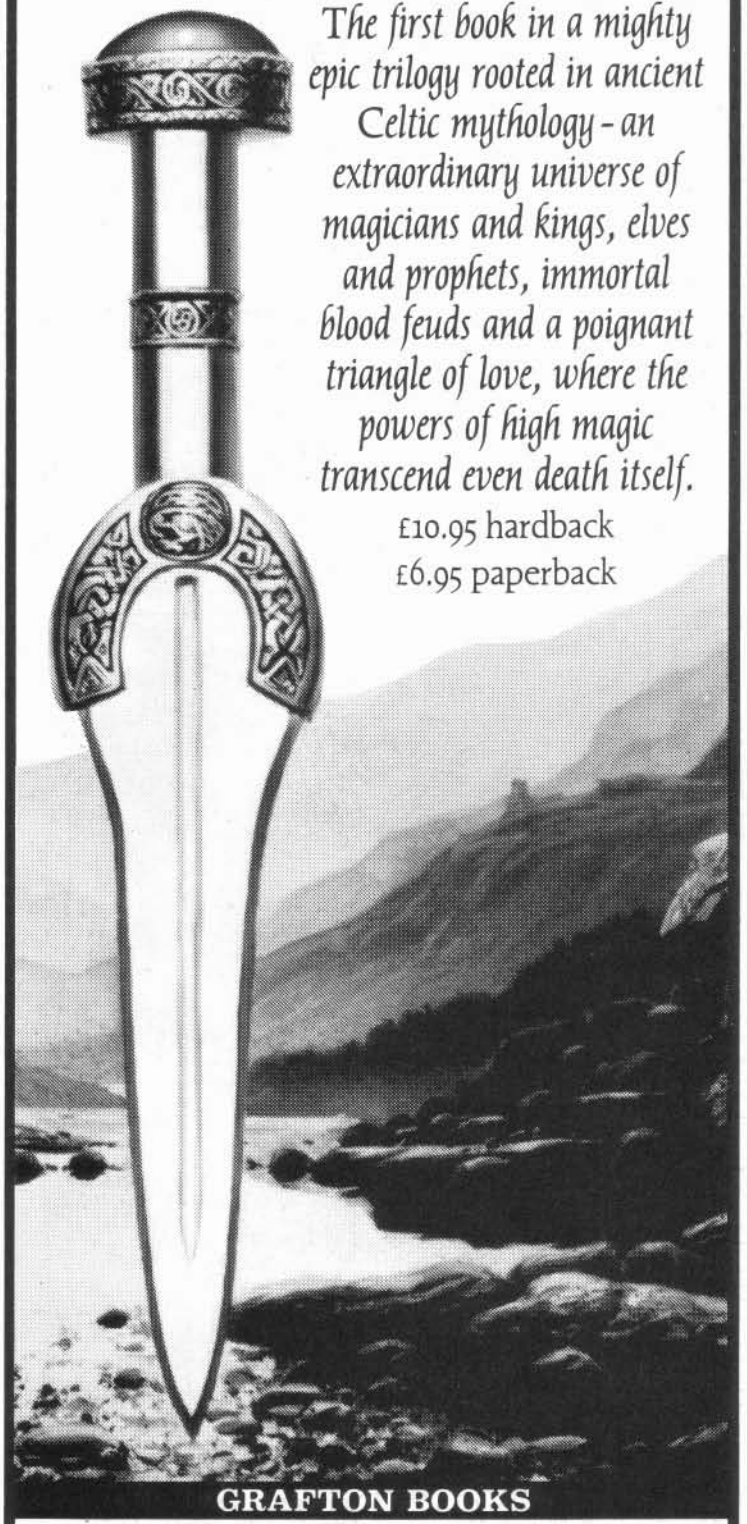
Katharine Kerr



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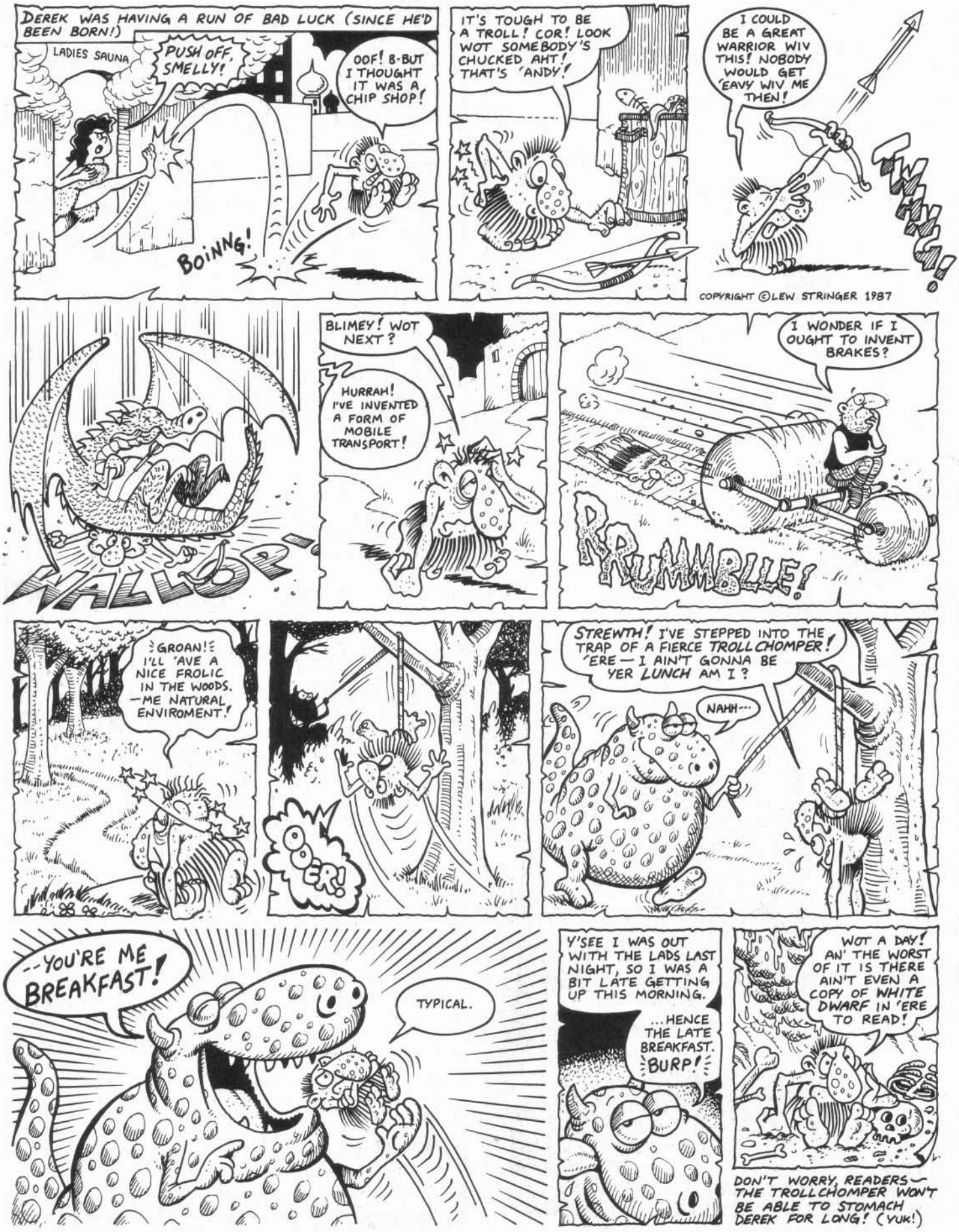

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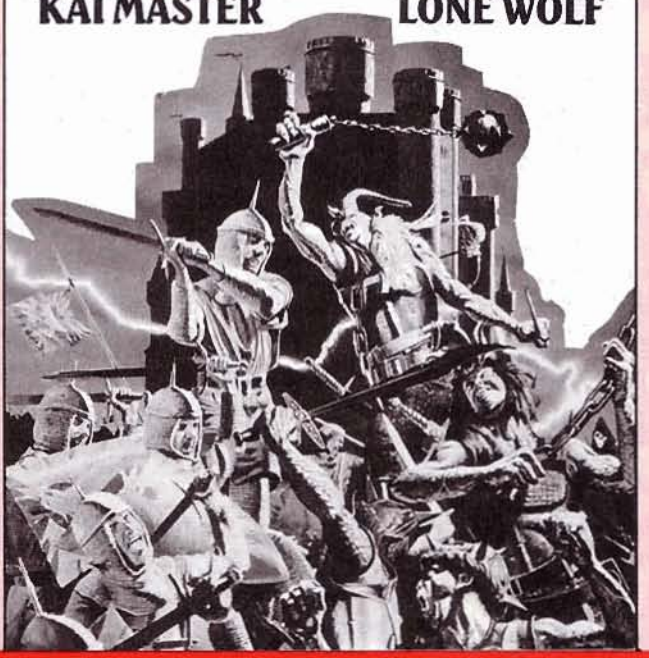

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on ealden Byrgen

Robin Hood is a new development in the world of roleplaying games: something more than a supplement — a new game for which you won't have to learn a book full of rules. The book, published by ICE, is an attempt to bridge the gap between new games with new rules, and campaign or adventure supplements which are wholly 'systemless' and need a good deal of work before they are usable.

You won't need *Robin Hood* to use this adventure. Part of the idea behind the book is that it should be a generic (ie universally useful) work of reference for gamers interested in the early mediaeval period and in the concept of a roleplaying game involving a band of outlaws. Although restricted in the number of roleplaying games it can actually mention, *Robin Hood* is conceived to be used with games ranging from *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* and *Middle-earth Roleplaying* to *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* and *Fantasy Hero.*

Some Conventions

Robin Hood uses terms and conventions with which you may not be familiar. Included in the book are various standard characters and encounters which may be lifted out and used directly in a game. These include various types of soldier and commoners, along with merchants, priests, nobles and the like. *Robin Hood* is set in a version of C11-13 England, so there is no provision for magic-using characters. However, the book has an optional 'mystical' element, based on the premise that any unusual event might have two interpretations: it might be the work of magic (be it deviltry, the Holy Spirit or white magic) or it may have a simple and rational explanation. There is a very blurred line dividing the natural and the super-natural which only you can clearly perceive.

The historical setting is supposed to be exactly that. You and the players have knowledge of the period concerned to help build a realistic atmosphere. Historical persons such as King Stephen and King Richard move through the land and there is a continuous catalogue of events outside the characters' influence: wars with France and Scotland, Crusades, national and inter-national politics, changes in the Church and the people in power, even changes in laws and social life.

Two campaign ideas are detailed in *Robin Hood*: one set in the Forest of Dean C1140-1155 and the more traditional one of Sherwood Forest in the time of King Richard and King John, 1189-1216. It is to the latter that you are now invited, to pit your wits against Sir Guy of Gisburne...

Illustrated by Paul Bonner

On Ealden Byrgen: Plot Outline

The characters in this adventure are assumed to be a known group of outlaws, acting outside the law, either for their own ends or to help others whom the law cannot protect. As such they are a thorn in the side of the local authority. Hopefully this adventure will illustrate how you can easily adapt an idea to your own game. Here the authorities are represented by Robert, Sheriff of Nottingham and his henchman Sir Guy of Gisburne. In your own game you may use suitable equivalents for them and any other characters (or places) mentioned.

The adventure is set at any time between 1189-1216 and takes place in the south/central stretches of Sherwood Forest, some miles northeast of the town of Nottingham. The dense wood is home to the characters, and it provides them with sanctuary and base from which to operate. And yet there are areas within the Forest where even they dare not go — one such being the Ealden Byrgen, low rolling hills topped with mysterious stones and barrow mounds, by turns misty and eerie or driven with howling winds.

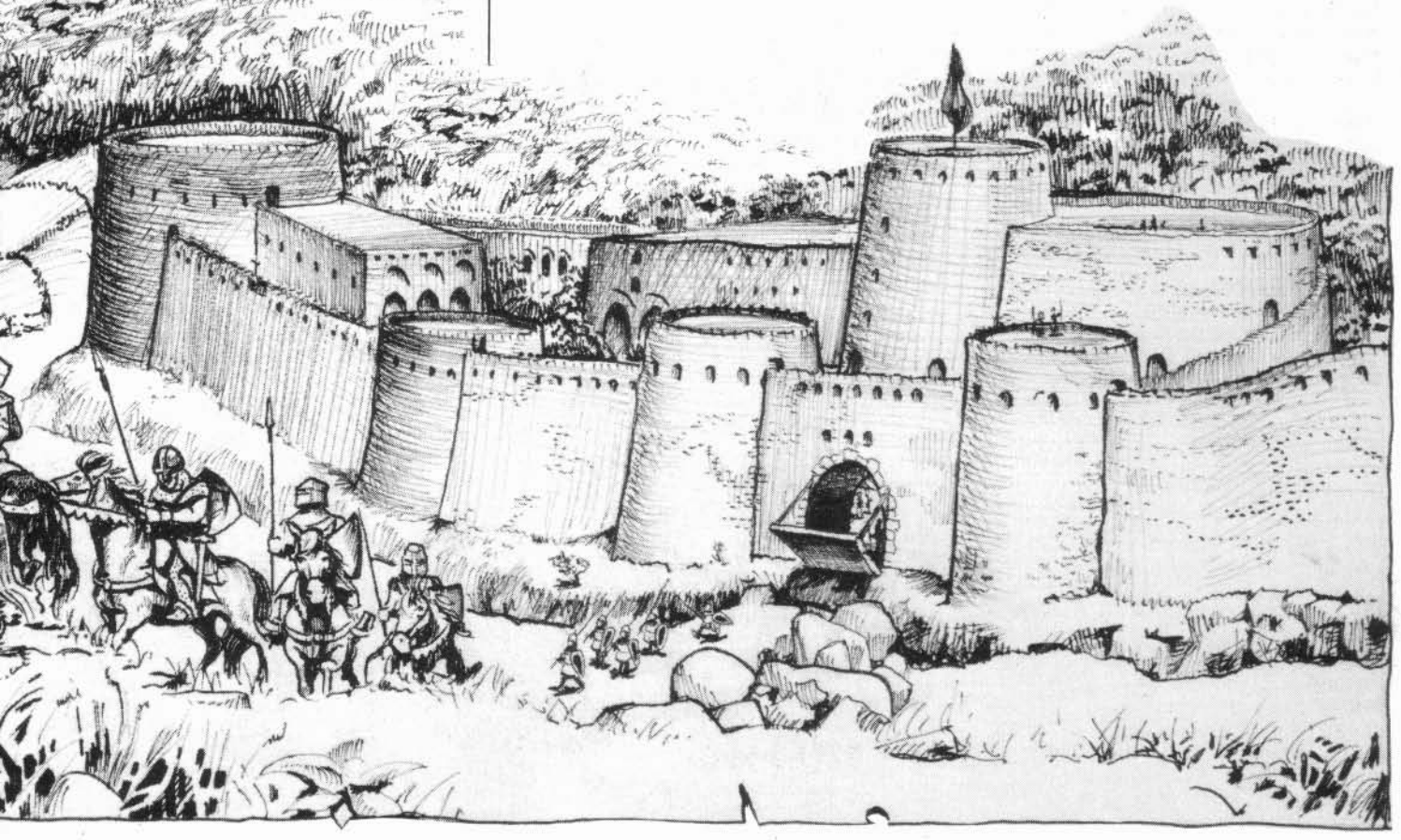
Sir Guy has been frustrated in the past on numerous occasions when he attempted to capture or deal with the outlaws. They always have managed to evade him or upset his plans whilst carrying out outrageous crimes against the rich and powerful. Now he as a new plan to trap them in an ambush on the Ealden Byrgen, with a false rumour of buried treasure hidden from all but the 'Lord of the Forest' — a title designed to both flatter and trick the leader of the character's band. However, there are chances for the characters to avoid the certain deadly fate that Gisburne has prepared for them.

Ultimately the characters stand to profit from the adventure. This is because Gisburne's plan has a fatal, is subconscious, flaw. His bait for the ambush, the treasure on Ealden Byrgen, actually exists, whereas he thinks it is something only in his own imagination. His lure, the *Lay of Ingelstane*, is a half-remembered fragment of an old Anglo-Saxon poem adapted immediately after the Norman conquest, when the English looked forward to a time when they would be freed from the yoke of the new lords. Some ancient combination of the spirits of the repressed people and their Forest has worked a power and truth into the legend... a power that might take expression through the characters and their actions. On the other hand, the events related below might just be coincidence...

The Man In The Stag

The adventure starts in daytime. The time of year is unimportant although an autumn setting might be most appropriate. The characters are in the southern or central area of Sherwood Forest. They might simply be out hunting, or on some mission.

Sherwood Forest, like other Royal Forests of the time, is subject to special laws in order to preserve the trees and wildlife as good hunting land for the King and a privileged few he grants the right to hunt there. The Forest Laws are enforced by the Verderers, a hated band of men under the overall command of a Warden — currently the Sheriff, although the duties are generally carried out by Sir Guy of Gisburne. For day-to-day purposes, the Verderers report to Foresters-in-Fee at four places in Sherwood, the centres of its four Leets or divisions. There are also Foresters



in Sherwood, but they are concerned more with tending the game than enforcing laws and troubling the people, which is what the Verderers enjoy. Their cruelty is renowned.

Suddenly, out of a leafy brake, a group of Verderers on a path meet the characters (or those who are visible). These are four of the Sheriff's men, together with two peasant woodcutters. The Verderers are not immediately recognisable, for they do not wear a uniform, but by their airs and bearing are obviously Normans or puffed-up Englishmen lording over their less domineering brethren. Each Verderer carries an oakleaf badge as a sign of their authority. They wear leathern jerkins beneath thick homespun cloaks and leggins. Each also carries a pick-like weapon hanging from a belt, a sure sign of a man with a position in society. Two of the men have light crossbows, the other two had spears. These have been put to another use — they are supporting a stag slung by its hoofs, carried by the two woodcutters. The peasants are dressed very roughly and have no weapons.

Anyone looking carefully at the stag (make an easy *Perception/Observe* check) will see that it is only a stag's skin. A man's bloody head protrudes from the neck of the beast and the rest of him is bundled up inside the hide. It appears that the Verderers have captured some poor man driven to poaching to feed his family, and the characters will hopefully attack the Verderers to rescue him. If they don't the Verderers may well challenge the party and/or recognise one of them as a wanted outlaw wolfshead and give chase. Statistics for the Verderers are given in *Robin Hood* and at the end of this adventure. They are moderately competent but overconfident and will at first rely on their authority to try and make the characters cower. If any are killed or seriously injured, the others are like to flee. The peasants will flee during any fight, having been pressed into service by the Verderers against their will. They play no further part in the adventure.

The fight with the Verderers should take place in a small woodland glade. There is plenty of room for the particiapants, and also the chance to sneak through the trees and undergrowth to surprise the opponents. A clever party should be able to see the Verderers off without suffering any loss.

Robert FitzOoth

Having despatched the Verderers, the characters will be left in the glade with the body wrapped in the skin of the stag. The hide has been roughly stitched together with thongs, and is very fresh. It can be easily cut open with a knife or other blade. The man inside is obviously in a bad way, covered in the blood of the stag and beaten and cut about. He is apparently exhausted and unable to say much until he has had some rest and, hopefully, a refreshing wash. The characters do not have to travel too far to find a decent stream or woodland pool suitable for this. Once cleaned up a bit, the man can be seen to have fair hair and a handsome, if somewhat pinched, face.

When he is able to speak, he gives his name as Robert FitzOoth. His name comes from his Norman paternal grandfather, but he was brought up in an English village with nothing other than his name to support him. He spent a little while as a soldier, more time wandering as a peddlar and singer on the continent, then worked hand-to-mouth in England. Recently he came to a large village near Sherwood and started courting a pretty young girl. Her father got drunk and attacked a guardsman one night and was imprisoned, leaving her mother and the girl herself with no means of support. Rumours spread by a vicious guardsman led to the family being shunned by the rest of the village. Soon they had no food and were starving, only just able to live on what little Robert could bring home. In the end he decided to go into Sherwood and try poaching. After one successful raid, someone in the village reported his activities to the Verderers who trapped him the second time he went into the Forest. After they captured him, he heard them say that the girl and her mother had been taken by the Sheriff's men and hung for eating poached venison, and no-one in the village raised a hand to help them.

Hopefully, the characters will take an interest in the poor man's story and ask him back to their camp. He will resist any idea that they should go to the village, even to take revenge, saying that he has no reason to return, and its people are in a bad enough situation without trouble from other outlaws. Whilst they travel or wait to prepare a meal, Robert will sing a few snatches of song about grieving lovers and the like. Hopefully this will encourage the characters to ask him to sing them a proper song later that evening. He will make every attempt to sing for them the *Lay of Ingelstane*:

On Ealden Byrgen stond a lonlie stane,
Full eaht cubites heah.
Hit hydes the tresure of a treowe King's thegn
Puttid there hwaenne he did dey.

Nane may finde that byriged golden hord
Save an mann onlie:
He who would be Forest thegn and hlaford
And who very meahtie be.

Robert can explain this lay to anyone who is interested: it is an old ballad about a standing stone (the *lonlie stane*) on the Old Barrows (*Ealden Byrgen*) of Sherwood. In the barrow beneath the stone is the *tresure* of a bold and strong supporter (the *treowe thegn*) of one of the old English Kings from the time before the Normans came. The lay tells that the treasure may be claimed by one man only, he who would be the *thegn and hlaford* (thane and lord) of the Forest. The man who claims the buried golden hoard must also be very mighty...

Robert also says that he heard the lay from an old local man who claimed that he knew where the Ingelstane was. This old man described the stone as a tapering dark column about 12′ high (*eaht cubites* = eight cubits; 1 cubit = 18″). The stone can be seen if one follows a tributary of the stream which flows down from the hills through Sudwelle to the Trent. The tributary is marked out by a great clump of overhanging willows at its confluence with the stream, and by numerous large reddish-grey boulders in its bed.

Robert is of course a rogue, charlatan and mischief-maker. Trapped while trying to steal from the wily Shefiff, he exchanged a dismal prison sentence for an opportunity to work and spy for his captor. He is an

accomplished liar and trickster with a silver tongue. If offered a chance to join the group, he will readily accept, and shows himself to be familiar with a sword, though not bows. Robert's statistics are given at the end of the adventure.

If Robert is not invited to join the characters, he will ask. If they refuse him, he will depart after bidding them farewell and saying he will go north and see if his luck will change. If he does leave, he will actually stay in the area and try to spy on the characters so that he can warn Gisburne of their movements. Hopefully they will be tempted to leave for the Ealden Byrgen.

A Warning

This section deals with the journey to the Ealden Byrgen. Much of the hills are open and bleak, cut with narrow streams and interspersed with stretches of dangerous bogs. Some valleys are filled with stunted trees and sprawling clumps of gorse, heather, broom and bramble. It is very easy to lose ones way as low cloud can descend suddenly onto the hills — this will necessitate a very difficult *Navigation/ Orientation* check. Characters seeking a sensible approach to the Byrgen may therefore follow the advice of Robert's old man and find the brook flowing into Sudwelle's stream.

You may wish to have some chance encounters on the characters' path to the Ealden Byrgen. If they keep to the woods, they will avoid contact with other people for the most part, but might have some difficult moments, such as crossing a fast stream. There are also other hazards, such as the odd wild animal or hunters' snares to trap the unwary.

On their way through Sherwood, they have to cross or follow a path between Oston and Farnesfield. The path is a simple track linking the two villages, used by peasants and the monks of Gresham Abbey (who have estates in both settlements). As the characters reach the path, they should make a *Perception/Observation* check to realise that someone a little up the track is watching them. The stranger is cloaked in a dull green-brown cloak that blends with the foliage around him. When the characters notice him, he will lower his enveloping hood to reveal a shock of black hair and intense eyes. If they pass him by, he will call out one of their names. The man is some yards away, and if anyone attempts to approach him he holds up his hand with the palm towards them. He then addresses them in a loud, roughly accented voice:

Men of the wood beware!
– Step not in the shadow of the stone
– Walk not in the teeth of the gale;
Cunning bow and sharp sword
Old opponent seeks your wyrd;
– Climb not on the barrowmound alone
– Hark not on the teller but the tale;
Men of the wood take care!

These are the only words that the man speaks. During the last few words, the characters should be asked to make a hard *Perception/Observe* check. Anyone suceeding hears hoofbeats coming along the path from the north.

Three Radechenistres

The sound is that of three *radechenistres* or *radmen*, landsmen who are partly free but owe certain services to their lord, including riding duties, hence their name. They are obliged to keep a horse and riding gear, and to use them for a number of days each year. One of these men is Sheriff's messenger from Farnesfield, the others are guardsmen.

The appearance of the riding men should be sufficient to distract the player character's attention away from the mysterious figure who, having uttered the warning, disappears into the Forest. Any attempt to search for a trace of the figure is doomed to failure.

How the characters react to the approach of the radmen is up to them. The messenger has a small casket bound in sackcloth on his saddle. This contains a number of valuables taken from the house of Sir Geoffrey d'Aincourt including three silver collars, a silver cup and a lady's brooch clasp wrought from gold and set with small pearls and turquoises. He also carries a number of letters taken from the house, addressed to Sir Geoffrey from the Bishop of Lincoln. These suggest he go on Crusade and leave his estates to the Church in the event of his death. Sheriff Robert is seeking ways to claim the estates of the missing Sir Geoffrey for himself, and the letters are strong evidence to dispute such a claim.

None of the men will fight to the death. They each have a small amount of money (a total of 24 silver pennies), along with their equipment: the messenger has a leather jerkin, a smallish sword and neat, if plain, clothes; the guards have chainmail, broadswords and tabards showing their allegiance.

On Ealden Bygen

The landmarks related by Robert FizOoth are not too difficult to find. Once the brook joining the Sudwelle stream is found, there is a change in the weather. A cold wind noticeably springs up, blowing clouds from the northeast. Soon the sun is obscured by the dirty white clouds and the landscape assumes a dull, bitter hue. The hills of the Ealden Byrgen loom up all around. There is little birdsong or other sign of animal life and even the gurgle of the brook seems muted.

Although barrows can be spotted on the broad backs of the upland here, there are no stones to be seen. The wind whips at the straggling, dark clumps of plants, shrubs and trees. If it is autumn there will be flurries of damp brown leaves whisked about as well. All the characters should make a medium *Perception/Observe* check. Those succeeding glimpse (or think they glimpse) a group of shadowy figures the brow of a hill, between two outcrops of stone. The figures do not reappear, and if the char-acters investivate the place, they will find nothing. If they search hard, they can discover some old bones in a niche in the bare, split rocks.

You should pick one or two of the successful characters and inform them of additional sightings (or half-sightings) as the journey continues. Their perceptions differ: there is a single, tall figure; there are several

small, pale creatures; the figure(s) are still or move quickly; they bob into sight from behind rocks and copses. After the third such occurence, those afflicted must make a *Fear* check or refuse to go on. A long rest, such as for a meal, will calm them down sufficiently to proceed but very shortly they will start seeing the figures again and must make another, harder, *Fear* check.

The land here, being broken, patched with marshy swathes and impenetrably tangled thickets makes for very slow progress. The day wears on and the light becomes very poor and the way even harder to see. You may require the characters to test various skills such as their knowledge of rough terrain, pathfinding and so on. If they fail they may get lost or trapped, or may give up if they fail an *Ego Roll/Willpower* check. They may also have some difficult *Movement rolls/Risk* checks to make.

If you wish you could have the group encounter a starving, solitary wolf or sick wild cat, springing out from behind cover at the smallest or least protected character. Note also that a number of mildly poisonous plants grow in this area, so if any character tries gathering anything for a meal there could be problems!

The Ingelstane

By this time the wind has risen to a gale against which the characters have to battle in addition to all their other problems. However, they are unlikely to wish to spend the night on the Old Barrows, and will in all likelihood press on. It is OK for you to casually remind them of the many tales — all of them gory — of what happens to anyone on the Ealden Byrgen at night.

Then, as the characters round a twist in the valley, they see the narrow tooth-like stone protruding from a mound atop the next hill. If any character asks to make a *Perception/Observe* check, there is a small chance that they spot a couple of figures dodging out of sight. These may be put down to the same source as the shapes seen earlier, but they are a good deal more solid.

The hill of the Ingelstane is unremarkable, but its far side is covered in scrubby trees. They are darkly shadowed in the fading light. Rain begins to fall in large, cold drops as the hill is approached. The mound on which the stone stands is about thirty feet broad and ten feet high, and obviously raised by the hand of man. Wiry grass covers the hump which stands out from the heather and bracken.

The stone itself is over twelve feet tall, slightly flattened, and broader at the base than at the top. It bears no inscription or other markings. Its base is firmly embedded in the mound, but if the plant growth there is removed and some of the earth scraped away, it can be seen that the stone is supported by a ring of stones within the mound, the tops of which can be discerned. Unfortunately, the characters will not have the chance to investigate any further at this point. If they heeded the warning, they may have prepared themselves, but they are suddenly faced with a column of men coming up the west side of the hill from the gloomy woods. At their head is the mounted figure of Sir Guy of Gisburne.

The precautions (if any) taken by the group dictate when the soldiers are spotted. At about this time, the sun breaks out from beneath the sullen, grey bands of cloud to

shed a thick red light across the scene before it sets. It glints off the soldiers' polished steel helms and casts bloody shadows before them. There are more than twenty men-at-arms, well armed and armoured, cloaked against the cold rain and eager to have at the outlaws. Gisburne shouts encouragement to his men and mocks the player characters.

The men-at-arms engage the characters as soon as they can and will not worry about casualties initially. If the characters look in disarray, Gisburne may chase after one or two himself. He is not afraid to cross swords with them, being a skilled fighter and the veteran of many tourna-ments. The top of the hill is slowly encircled and the player characters forced to retreat towards the barrow and the Ingelstane. Allow two guardsmen per character and have the rest rush around to surround them.

The Stone Falls

In the midst of the fighting there is a terrific clap of thunder almost directly overhead. All those fighting pause momentarily, then a strong gust of wind rushes past. At this point it is necessary that someone is fighting at the top of the hill by the stone, for there is a terrible grinding sound that trembles through the earth. If anyone looks up at the Ingelstane, they will see it gradually tilt to one side and then, gathering momentum, fall. As it rushes to meet the earth, it traps a guardsman who is crushed to death.

Lightning forks down several times as the men-at-arms look on aghast. The characters may take this opportunity to launch an attack on the stunned guards. After the Ingelstane falls, it is only a matter of time before the men-at-arms begin to flee. Gisburne rides around frantically, trying to rally his men, but they are afraid of the things which have been awakened to guard the characters.

With victory slipping from his grasp, the young knight decides to withdraw and rides off at a gallop, quickly outdistancing the characters. It is important to have an opponent who returns again and again to cross swords with the characters.

After the stone falls, the storm begins to die down. By the time all the men-at-arms have fled, there is no more lightning and the wind and rain has lessened. However, darkness is rapidly approaching and if the characters are to do any more investigating they should do so immediately. If they wish to seek cover, there is shelter to be found amongst the trees where Gisburne laid his ambush, as well as wood for a fire if they should desire it.

Anyone mounting the barrow mound after the fight should make a *Perception/Observe* check. The last rays of the sun shine throught he dwindling rain forming a rainbow arching from the Ealden Byrgen to the edge of the Forest proper. A successful check will bring the viewer's attention a great oak tree at the foot of the rainbow. The tree has been sheared off by a bolt of lightning and its huge wound reflects whitely, the wet, fresh wood pointing like an arrow down into the earth.

If the characters look at the base of the Ingelstane, they will find only the six stones set deep into the earth. They cannot be uncovered or moved without a major digging operation. There is no treasure to be found here - not surprisingly, since Gisburne invented the lay.

Truestone

If the characters did not see the blasted tree the night before, they should be given the chance to spot it if they travel back towards the eaves of Sherwood in the morning. Otherwise they will have missed it entirely.

The tree is not difficult to find. About a quarter of its branches have been struck down and the gash, where the wood split and fell away, is about four feet wide and ten feet high, making it easily noticeable. The blast has also caused the tree to be wrenched somewhat from the earth, as the characters discover when they arrive. On one side a number of roots have been dragged into the air. Beneath is a curious pale stone, with the glitter of quartz scattered in it.

On closer inspection, it is obvious that the stone has been laid here purposefully. It is carefully carved into an oval shape, and there is an inscription on its surface, easily discernible if the earth is brushed away. The stone cannot be moved, nor can anyone see how thick it is.

The inscription on the stone is in old Anglo-Saxon runes. It reads:

The Helm of the Geats,
His life's full of portion paid out, said
Bid men of battle build me a tomb.
So did his well-loved shieldsman,
whose courage did not crumble
When called to defend his bold-tempered chieftain.
This slaughter-bed raised for
Wiglaf Weoxstan's son
His life's journey wise and full of years

It requires special knowledge to be able to read the runes as they are no longer used for writing. A character skilled in English or Norse may have some chance to read them. Other language skills might also be of use. If the words 'Helm of the Geats' are pronounced over the stone, it can be easily lifted at any point thereafter by anyone present when the words were spoken.

Anyone with knowledge of folklore, legends, lays and so on may have a chance to know something about the inscription once revealed. The Helm of the Geats is the title borne by Beowulf. Wiglaf was the only thane of his brave enough to join Beowulf in the king's last fight, against a Dragon. Beowulf ruled the Geats (or Weather-Geats) for many years, bringing them great prosperity, but left no son. Soon after his death in fighting the Dragon, Beowulf's kingdom was overrun and its people fled. Some, led by Wiglaf, are said to have come to England where many other Germanic tribes already dwelt.

In the tomb are Wiglaf's charred bones, now turned to dust, along with three items: a helm, a shirt of ring-mail and a large sword. All these pieces of war-gear were taken by Weoxtan from Eanmund, Ohthere's son and may some special attributes. The war-helmet could protect agains fire and heat and protect the head from blows. The corselet or mail-shirt will turn blades and warn against an attacker coming from behind. The ancient sword, for such is the provenance of blades once embedded in a Dragon's neck, needs great strength and courage to wield, but cuts deeply and will not break.

Non-Player Characters

VERDERERS

The Verderers are given as standard character types in *Robin Hood*, for *Fantasy Hero, MERP* and *RoleMaster. Statistics are given here for:*

WARHAMMER ROLEPLAY

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A
4	42	50	5	3	8	44	2

Dex	I	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
34	1	28	33	38	28	25

Skills	Careers
Concealment Rural	Gamekeeper
Dodge Blow	Militiamen
Game Hunting	
Follow Trail	
Marksmanship	
Set Trap	
Silent Move Rural	
Spot Traps	

Verderers are armed with small picks and some have light crossbows or spears (see text). They wear reinforced leather jerkins for protection.

ROBERT FITZOOTH

FitzOoth is a standard *Thief* character type from *Robin Hood*, with the following amendments:
Fantasy Hero - +5 PRE, +6 COM, Fw Swords & Thrown weapons, +1 level Swords, Concealment (12-), KS: Contacts (12-), KS: Nottinghamshire (11-), Run 7", Swim 1".
MERP - PR 75, AP 80, 1-handed Edged Weapons +45, Missile Weapons +35, KS: Notts (4), Contacts (4).

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A
5+2	53	37	4	4	8	45	2

Dex	I	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
46	1	41	33	40	30	35

Skills	Careers
Blather	Thief
Concealment Rural	Racketeer
Concealment Urban	Outlaw
Dodge Blow	
Fleet Footed	
SL: Thieves' Tongue	
SS: Thieves' Signs	
SS: Woodsman's Signs	
Silent Move Rural	
Silent Move Urban	
Set Trap	
SpW: Fist Weapons	
Street Fighting	
Strike to Stun	

Robert FitzOoth has no possessions other than his ragged clothing when he is rescued.

MESSENGER

The messenger is a standard *Household Servant* character type with the *Messenger* and *Radman* options. For *WFRP* use the *Footpad* character from the sample adventure included in the rulebook, *The Oldenhaller Contract*, adding the skill *Ride - Horse*.

MESSENGER'S GUARDS

These men are standard *Town Guardsman* characters from *Robin Hood*.

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A
4	41	35	3	3	7	30	1

Dex	I	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
29	1	29	29	29	29	29

Skills
Ride - Horse

The guards have average horses, mail shirts, a light crossbow, a sword, and a helmeet and shield to round out their gear. They are not very good fighters and will flee rather than protect their charge. Neither has much in the way of valuables.

MEN-AT-ARMS

The men-at-arms are standard character types from *Robin Hood*.

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A
4	46	41	4	3	9	44	2

Dex	I	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
44	1	36	30	28	27	30

Skills	Careers
Disarm	Soldier
Dodge Blow	
Ride-Horse	
SL: Battle Tongue	
SpW: Bastard Sword	
Street Fighting	
Strike Mighty Blow	

Men-at-arms have mail coats, shields and bastard swords; they may also be optionally equipped with light crossbows or spears. Men-at-arms also suffer from *Non-luck* which works like the *Luck* skill but affects the man's opponent in a battle.

SIR GUY OF GISBURNE

Gisburne may be found in the *Robin i' the Hood* campaign section of *Robin Hood*. he is one of the principal characters in the Nottingham area as far as outlaws are concerned. Sir Guy comes from Lancashire originally and is a young knight with no land, but quite a bit of power under the Sheriff of Nottingham. He enjoys tournaments and women, but gets on very poorly with common folk.

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A
4	65	35	7	5	9	54	3

Dex	I	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
44	1	62	43	59	29	40

Skills	Careers
Blather	Noble
Charm	Free Lance
Disarm	
Dodge Blow	
Etiquette	
Gamble	
Heraldry	
Hunt Game	
Luck	
Read/Write	
Ride - Horse	
SL: Battle Tongue	
SpW: Lance	
SpW: Parrying Weapon	
Strike Mighty Blow	
Strike to Injure	
Strike to Stun	
Wit	

Sir Guy has a fine horse and an excellent suit of mail which cover all areas even his handsd. He also wears a steel casque helm and bears a metal and wood shield emblazoned with his own device. He will have a number of valuable objects with him, including some money, a handsome sword, buckles and clasps etc.

Inspiration for this adventure must be credited to the TV series Robin of Sherwood, a HTV/Goldcrest production; and also to Beowulf, in the verse translation by Michael Alexander for Penguin Classics.

Graham Staplehurst

RAVENING HORDES

We're completely mad, you know! And this is your chance to take advantage of our crumbling mental state!

We're giving away **£1000 worth of Citadel Miniatures** as a **first prize** - just like that! Well, almost just like that!

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BUT WAIT! THERE MUST BE A CATCH!!

Well, yes, there is. But it's only a little one. All you have to do is...

Write us a ***Warhammer Battle*** scenario featuring two 2500 points armies chosen from the ***Ravening Hordes*** Army Lists. That's all. The winning entries will be published if we think they are suitable.

We are looking for interesting, enjoyable entries. It doesn't have to be particularly complicated or involved, but your scenario should present challenging tactical problems and leave room for careful planning by the players. In fact, your entry should be everything *you* would want from a ***Warhammer Battle*** scenario. You can opt for the format used in the published scenarios, or you can invent a system of your own, in any case the emphasis must be on playability, eligance and fun!

How big you make your scenario is up to you. You should include all the diagrams, maps and details that you think are necessary - and if you use any buildings or special features include details of how to make the card models or floorplans. If you can type your entry, so much the better! It should be double spaced (one blank line between lines of type) and on one side of the paper only (A4 sheets, if possible). Handwritten entries are OK, but remember that just because *you* can read your handwriting doesn't mean that *we* can! If your entry can't be read it is unlikely to get a fair judgement... The other thing to remember is that your entry should be presented in such a way that it is easily understood, even by novice players.

Your entry should reach us by 3 August 1987. That gives you about three months to complete your masterpiece. Go on then, ***START!*** One last thing. Sorry, but we are going to be unable to return any entries, so please make sure you keep a copy of your scenario.

Send your entries to:

Ravening Madness Giveaway Competition
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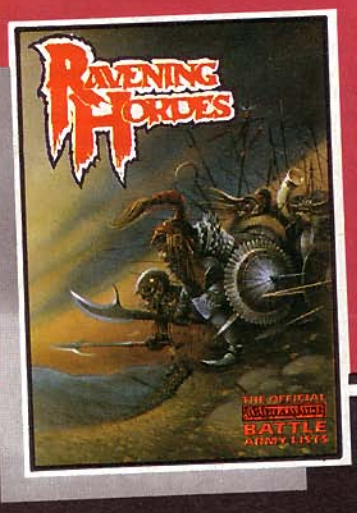

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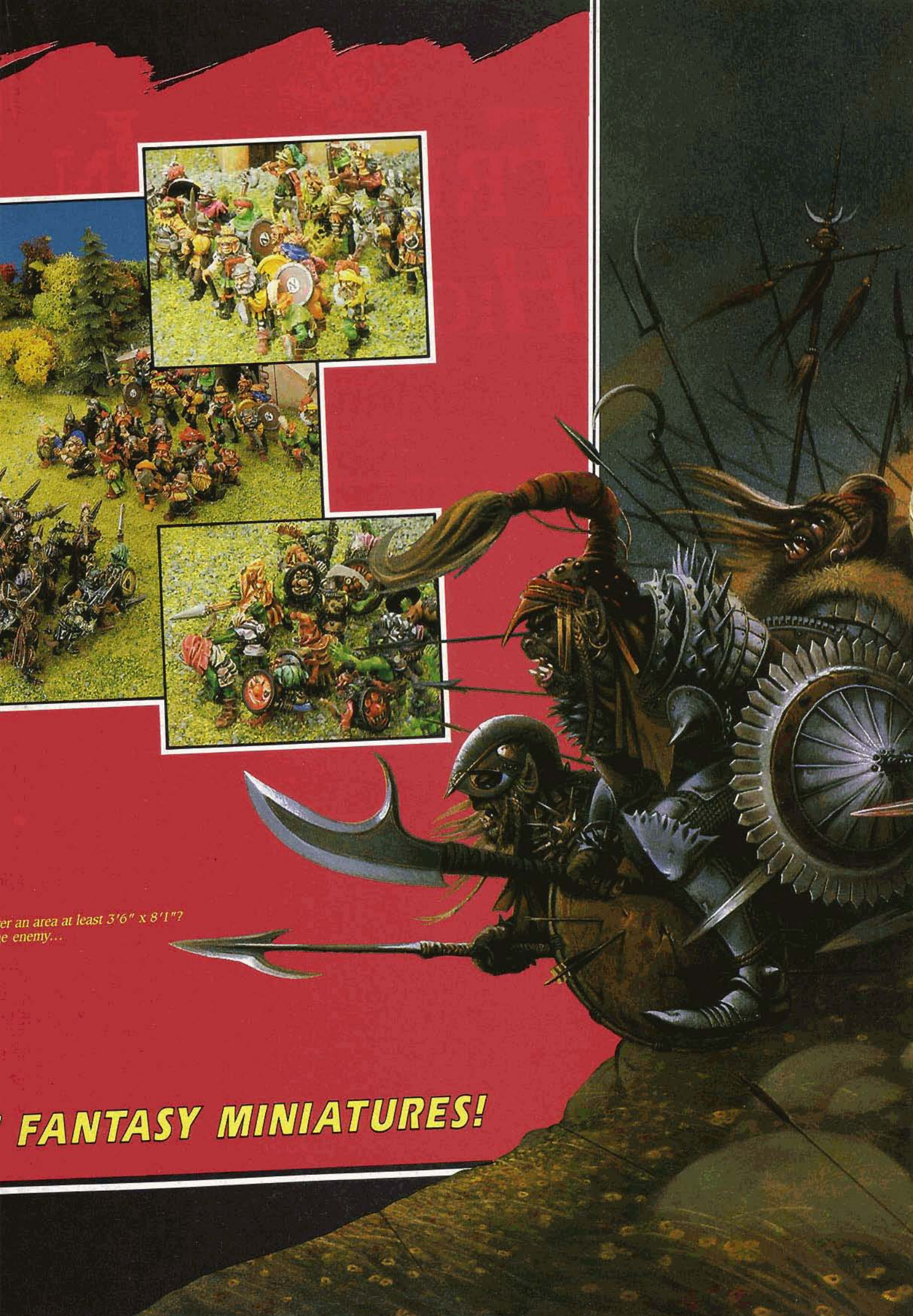

er an area at least 3'6" x 8'1"?
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FANTASY MINIATURES!

Illustrated by Euan Smith

FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

Deception and Intrigue in Roleplaying Games

by Simon Nicholson

The noble lady who weaves lies as if they were silk... The cunning priest who schemes beneath his smile... The treacherous double-dealings of high-ranking officials, struggling to stay at the top... The plots and counterplots of ambitious Courtiers, vying for the King's favour...

These ideas are common in literature: the reader becomes involved with the characters by following the plans they carry out. Although roleplaying games have their roots in such fiction, they rarely employ the theme of intrigue to any great extent, preferring the typical 'Great Quest'. This article discusses some common intrigue plots, and explains how they can be used to create a more challenging and stimulating game.

Game worlds can differ greatly, but there is always a ruling class or group. Most fantasy worlds use the medieval feudal system, with all power originating from a monarch or Emperor. Inventive Gamemasters can always create their own strange governmental forms, or steal from fantasy novels. It is amongst the most powerful people in the land that intrigue and conspiracies are common: disagreements can cause revolutions, and words can stop armies. Naturally, you can have a lot of fun plunging your players into the deep end of an imaginary society.

High Society

How your players become involved with such eminent people depends upon your game and campaign. It is unlikely that the player characters are noble, but they may have performed some service or duty which deserves reward.

Acquiring power is one thing: holding on to it is another. Consider the position of a nobleman at Court. There are always inferiors, rivals and social climbers who would love to be in his shoes. He knows that someone must be plotting his fall - how will it be? A scandal? Will they implicate him in some real or imaginary act of treason against the King? Or will they conspire with other, more powerful courtiers? If the nobleman is actually involved in some secret intrigue - an affair with the Queen, for example - then he has all the more to worry about. A natural reaction would be to plot against his enemies, hoping to destroy them first. And he should plot against his superiors too, just in case. All these secret plans will require dark deeds, spying, assassination, scapegoats. And the player characters characters will do nicely for the last item! He's heard of their exploits, and he might just be able to persuade them...

Although the nobleman will treat the PCs with politeness and dignity, he will almost certainly consider them expendable. Rewards of money or power are small: the noble does not want the PCs getting any ideas above their station. However, while in his employ they live well, eat well and dress well. He will give them temporary positions of power as servants or minor officials, perhaps even pretend they are 'distant relatives' or 'long lost cousins', so that they may infiltrate the Court and carry out his instructions. Clever PCs may use this opportunity to advantage, but the nobleman should expect just such a move and prepare against it.

Not everyone at Court is a paranoid megalomaniac. Good, loyal nobles may ask the PCs to undo the damage of an evil courtier or foil the plans of a usurper. The archetypal and eponymous swashbucklers *The Three Musketeers* became entangled in the intrigue of the French Court in this way.

Lowly adventurers may be a little out of place amongst the aristocracy. For a start, they are probably unfamiliar with social etiquette or diplomatic protocol. This could be embarrassing and potentially dangerous. It's all very well being able to decapitate a dragon with one blow, but what about dancing a minuet? The PCs may find themselves expelled, demoted, imprisoned or executed simply because they did not bow correctly to a foreign ambassador. If they are insulting, they may be challenged to a duel. It should not take them long to discover that a Court can be deadlier than a dungeon...

Yes, Minister...

You don't need to be of noble birth to enjoy wealth and power. A good education and a few connections can get you into the right places. It is the ministers, merchants and officials who really run a country. They must deal with matters which are considered too petty or too important to be handled by aristocrats, and they do their utmost to ensure the nobility never interferes. A typical shady minister is Grima Wormtongue in *Lord of the Rings*, although why King Theoden ever listened to a counsellor called *Wormtongue*...

Business and ministerial organisations have similar structures of rank and privilege. Just as courtiers engage in a social struggle for love and power, so the clerks and officials fight for promotion through bureaucratic channels. Of course, there are many organisations, and this can lead to external, as well as internal, intrigue.

The Guild system, for example, can provide endless plot ideas. Historically, Merchants' Guilds first appeared in the seventh century: they became so powerful that Craft Guilds were set up in opposition, and inter-Guild struggles became common.

Consider the relationship between two common game world guilds, the Merchants' Guild and the Thieves' Guild. The merchants travel and trade while the thieves rob the merchants, so they are enemies. It needn't stop there, however. Perhaps the Merchants' Guild hires adventurers to spy on the Thieves (not a pleasant prospect) and report future robberies or discover names. Perhaps a merchant is really a mole for the Thieves' Guild. The Merchants' Guild may pay protection money, or a master thief is being bribed to discourage his colleagues. When you consider the internal wrangling that goes on, it is feasible that certain disreputable merchants may 'grass' on rivals to the Thieves' Guild, thus destroying their competitors.

Obviously, ideas like these can be much more interesting than the usual 'You are hired to protect a merchant caravan', and can add a lot of depth to a game. Think one step further than usual, and you can create much better adventures.

Motivation

How do you get the players interested in the affairs of Kings and Ministers? Rather than making them feel obliged to take part in your intrigue scenario, you can motivate them through the use of character ties and loyalties. Some typical devices are:

Individual Aims - All characters wish to achieve something, even if this is only the acquisition of wealth, love and knowledge. They may also have a personal code which governs how those aims are achieved. A knight, for example, would seek fame and recognition through his personal code of chivalry and valour. Regular *White Dwarf* readers will already know how to create character backgrounds and goals. Use the PCs' aims to involve them more deeply in a situation.

Allegiance - The character obeys the commands of a king, noble, ruler or superior. This can be interesting when the character is ordered to do something against his personal moral code and a crisis of conscience arises as a result. Or the PCs are given opposing orders by different superiors, with heavy punishment for failing to obey either. They should have a tough time deciding whose orders are most important, and it may be necessary for them to pretend they have obeyed...

> Not everybody at court is a paranoid Megalomania.

Achilles Heel - The character has a weakness. Anything from a fear of spiders to excessive alcoholism may be used as a weapon by an enemy or rival. Again, weaknesses will depend on the character's background, and the GM can design certain situations around a weakness.

Loyalty - The characters are loyal towards certain persons, and may obey unofficial or unsanctioned orders from that person. If the person is threatened or endangered, the characters will help of their own accord. This can present some interesting problems - what if the King's mistress were to ask the PCs to deceive the King in some manner, saying that her life depended on it? Whilst their allegiances would be to the mon-arch first and foremost, they may feel a greater loyalty towards his mistress. Surely it won't hurt to...? And besides, anyone who tells the King that they think his mistress is a traitor deserves to be executed.

Rivalry - The characters have a rival in some task or mission, or they compete for love, attention or responsibility. Rivals needn't be enemies - they probably have the same goals and morals - but that doesn't stop them trying to outdo each other.

Enmity - The character has a sworn enemy. Arch enemies have become very popular in roleplaying games, but don't ignore the other possibilities. A close friend may really be plotting the character's downfall, or feeding him false information. Simply by supporting somebody, the PCs will make enemies and allies. Allies may quickly become enemies if the PCs lose power or influence. Supporting the underdog is laudable but only if you can afford to do so.

The best enemies are clever and resourceful. They use subtlety and intrigue to achieve their ends. Morgana in Arthurian legend is magically powerful, but doesn't blast her enemies with fireballs. All that wasted energy! A word here, an untruth there, and enemies are too busy fighting each other to worry about her next move...

Responsibility - The character holds a position of power which requires certain actions and beliefs. In *RuneQuest*, for example, characters can join one of a number of cults. They are expected to uphold the aims and beliefs of the cult, even if this means personal risk. Members of rival cults are automatically enemies.

Personal aims can conflict with responsibilities. In Gene Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun*, Severian the Torturer falls in love with a 'client' and lets her die. He is exiled by his guild because the woman was supposed to die slowly and painfully. The honour of the Torturers' Guild is stained by his actions.

Love - This is a difficult one to run, as it depends heavily on the roleplaying ability of your players. The love affair of two NPCs can have interesting repercussions, however, as in *Romeo and Juliet*. Perhaps a noble, desperate to impress a young lady, hires adventurers to fake kidnappings and holdups. The noble naturally 'comes to the rescue' every time...

Tradition - Its own raison d'etre, tradition continues because it is traditional. Strange laws and customs may be invoked for no reason other than that they have always been invoked. Mervyn Peake's *Titus Groan, Gormenghast* and *Titus Alone* describe a vast castle-realm so steeped in tradition that it crumbles under the weight: the young ruler inevitably rebels.

If somebody were to break with a strong tradition they would be blamed for all subsequent evils and disasters that befell the kingdom, regardless of the real reasons. Michael Moorcock's Elric is accused for the downfall of Melnibonè in this way.

Tradition is a useful tool for the clever. Reviving old forgotten customs may allow you to manipulate people normally beyond your control. Perhaps there is a custom which requires a pilgrimage by a noble through dangerous wilderness. Maybe 'it is written that' one of the King's High Counsellors must be a commoner, or that the King must spend one day of every year amongst his people. The possibilities are truly endless, and can be used to great effect.

What A Tangled Web We Weave

It is important that you treat the PCs as individuals rather than 'the party' when running games of intrigue. Many adventures regard the party as a single-minded, single-purpose creature with many abilities, and while this is suitable in most cases it doesn't really work when the PCs have different motives and aims. They may even turn against each other, so try to get the players interacting as *characters* rather than as *players*.

Remember, intrigue depends heavily on NPCs. Graeme Davis' article *A Cast of Thousands* (WD77) detailed some good techniques for using NPCs. You should aim to make NPCs as important as PCs. Don't try to create an entire court; just choose and detail a few important characters. You don't need to be a good actor (or even a bad actor) to roleplay them convincingly. Simply calculate what they would do in the situation and, like the characters in books, they will become real through their actions.

Obviously, there are some games more suitable for intrigue than others. *RuneQuest* has its cults and guilds, and there is a chance for PCs to be nobles. *Pendragon* is about King Arthur's court, and naturally lends itself to intrigue. *Paranoia* has the characters belonging to service groups and secret societies while trying to serve the Computer and please High Programmers! Considering it is only a 'fun' game, *Paranoia* has a lot more going for it than some serious games.

So, you have managed to involve your players with the plots and counterplots. Now they have to start dealing with important matters - staying alive, for example. If the matter is of an 'intimate' nature then a noble with contacts can ask the Thieves' or Assassins' Guilds to undertake a mission. For a percentage, the Guilds will accept missions on behalf of members. And then there are always these ways of dealing with 'important matters':

> You don't need to be of Noble Birth to enjoy wealth and power.

Spying - The PC must discover and report on the actions of another. Nobles will pay good money for rumours and secret information... that is, unless they can hire some adventurer for a pittance. Usually, the spy will be expected to find some evidence that leads to blackmail or imprisonment. The spy will spend time gaining the victim's confidence, but it may be necessary to trick the victim to obtain information. Perhaps a foreign envoy is passing through Court, carrying important documents of negotiation. The spy might try to drug the envoy's drink, in which case he will have to beware the tables are not turned - perhaps literally, as a clever envoy might switch the drinks...

> Reviving old customs may allow you to manipulate people normally beyond your control.

Rulers will have their own secret police organisations, watching out for spies. Very insecure rulers may call in adventurers to spy on moles in the secret police.

There is no limit to what spies must endure. The Chevalier D'Eon, Louis XV's favourite spy and an expert swordsman, was required to spend much of his life dressed as a woman! In the course of duty he was tricked, ridiculed, betrayed, poisoned with opium, and accused of insanity. He found it necessary to keep eight pistols, four muskets and two sabres in his room...

Impersonation - The PC must impersonate somebody important and use the attendant power to someone else's ends. A disguise might be necessary, but the PC could still be unmasked by proof of the deception, a close friend, or the PC's lack of knowledge. In the 18th century a man turned up in Moscow calling himself Montmorency, the French King's minister. He lived well for several days before it was discovered he was

really a wig-maker from Saint-Honore.

Many stories have been based on the idea of a doppelganger, a person who looks exactly like somebody else. Maybe Wilmost Croak, a thief, bears a remarkable resemblance to Prince Edgar - and Edgar's arch-enemy has found out. Something along the lines of The Prisoner of Zenda might follow. Of course, if Prince Edgar found out first then Wilmost might not be so lucky. The Dumas classic *The Man in the Iron Mask* is based on fact...

So you have managed to involve your players with the plots and counter-plots. Now they have to start dealing with important matters like staying alive.

Framing - It's all very well spying on somebody, but what if they are innocent? The PC will just have to perform some foul deed, leaving enough incriminating evidence of someone else's misdeeds. A noble might hire adventurers to attack him, making it look like the work of an enemy.

Slander - Though not as drastic as falsely implicating someone, slander can just as easily destroy a person's reputation. Spreading rumours is the best way to start. No matter how petty or ridicul-ous they may sound, they will sow the seeds of doubt. A lie or three in the right ears will ensure that the doubt spreads. People will always believe what they like to hear. With a little Machiavellian precision, the victim will lose so many friends and allies that he will no longer pose a threat. The extent of a such a campaign of whispers will depend on the ruthlessness of the perpetrator(s).

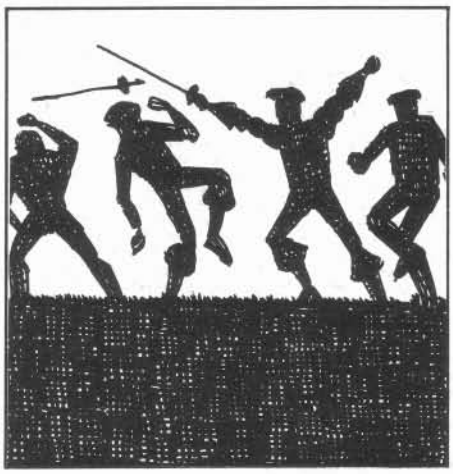
Duelling - As a method of settling arguments duels do not require strenuous logic or reason. Depending on the mood, courage and stupidity of the participants, duels can be fought to the death or to first blood. In the latter, the winner was the first to inflict a wound on his opponent. Duels are serious matters, and have to be carried out with strict observance of the rules. The original duel was of course the joust, which had its own rules. Jousts could even be fought in somebody's name — to uphold the honour of a lady, for example.

First a challenge is issued by the injured party and to turn this down is a certain way of losing honour and respect. The injured party also has choice of weapons. Each duellist appoints a second, who fights if the duellist is taken ill. The authorities are informed - duelling was legal for a long time - the place and time arranged, and a qualified referee and witnesses agreed upon to ensure fair play.

It is likely that a PC could be tricked into duelling with an expert swordsman. Perhaps a nobleman will appoint a capable PC as his second, then feign illness! Remember that the more powerful ministers and aristocrats are above the suspicion of dishonour, and anyone who challenged them would be laughed out of Court.

Violence - Assassination, robbery, torture, abduction: all of those things at which adventurers excel. They might be fighting to help somebody, of course, or performing the routine rescue missions. If, like D'Artagnan, they are trying to put right some evil perpetrated by a High Counsellor, they might find them-selves accused of treason and chased by the King's Guard. There just isn't any justice in the world.

In the course of duty he was tricked, ridiculed, betrayed, poisoned with opium, and accused of insanity.



Intrigue And Magic

Magical divination and detection spells take on a new importance if you consider how they might be used at Court. Aristocrats would carry charms of protection and resistance, and all important business would have to be conducted in 'magic proof' chambers. If magic was very common then magic-users might be employed specifically to protect the nobility. The King would have to be resistant to magic to defend against an attack from afar.

Religious magic is another problem. Kings are said to be chosen by the Gods, so perhaps the nobility are naturally magic-resistant. The Churches would certainly support this claim - if the King is a mortal chosen by the Gods, he must be made head of the Churches. With a King at their head, Churches would gain much more power over the land, of course since the King would be subject to Church rules...

Conflict

For a game to be challenging, there must be conflict. The most common form of roleplaying conflict is combat, where the possibility of character death provides the thrills. Although exciting, combat can become boring if used repeatedly.

This article should have given you some ideas for non-violent conflict. If their characters become involved in intrigue and make (and carry out) decisions, the players are encouraged to roleplay. Let them acquire fancy titles, and get them to write letters of intrigue to other characters. Don't, on the other hand try to come up with the game equivalent of Graves' *I, Claudius* or Peake's *Titus Groan*, or your game will collapse under a pile of sub-plots. And don't try anything unless you think it's going to be fun!

I know you'll agree with me. You see, I know all about you and - oh please, call it persuasion... Blackmail is such an ugly word.

Simon Nicholson

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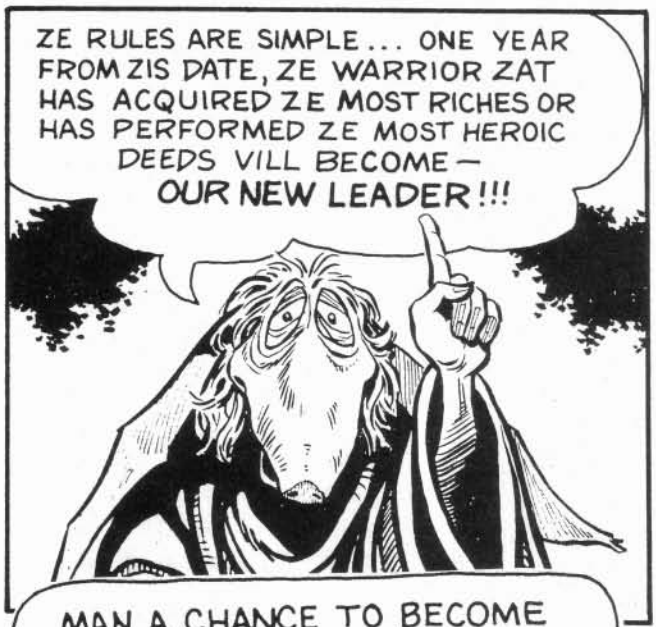

Snarfenja De'Gottago (Snarf)

AC by armour type; MV 12"; 4th-level fighter; hp 23; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA revolver; SD +2 on all saving throws from extraordinary luck, surprised on 1 in 6 due to keen hearing and sense of smell; S 12, I 14, W 10, D 13, C 12, Ch 12; AL N.

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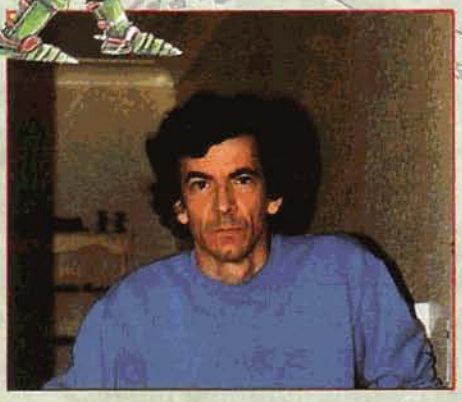

This Month: Phil Lewis - Painting *His* Way

Ever get the feeling that *lots* of *'Eavy Metals* start in the same sort of way? Just to keep with the tradition I thought that here was as good a place as any...

The figure starts, almost invariably, with a black undercoat. This is because I tend to paint up to any joints and creases in the figure and leave a 'ready made' black lining. I use enamels quite a lot. Their slightly thicker consistency gives a better covering over the black undercoat. If you use white as an undercoat you're almost certainly better off with acrylics.

As I find that drybrushing gives a better contrast in a photographs, the next stage is to pick the largest area on a model that's going to end up being one colour.

On *Skrag the Slaughterer*, this is obviously the bulk of the armour. In this instance almost the entire model was drybrushed with an aluminium enamel and left to dry overnight. When dry, the axe handle and parts of the head were then 're-blacked' with an acrylic paint. To give a little more interest to the armoured finish, a wash of brown ink was put over it, leaving the chainmail and collar the original aluminium shade. The axe head was also given an ink wash - although in this case

Fig.1

Fig.2

Fig.3

Fig.4

Fig.5

Fig.6

Fig.7

Fig.8

Fig.9

Fig.10

Fig.11

Fig.12

one of lime green. This left just the axe handle to be drybrushed brown, the studs to be picked out and, finally, the face. This was painted using a blended mixture of flesh, dark brown, yellow and white acrylics.

Bagrian posed a different challenge as I wanted the figure to look something like the picture on the front of the Spring '86 *Citadel Journal*. To get the shading in the red robes and cloak I began with a chestnut brown enamel over all the relevant parts of the figure and, once this was dry, a wash of brown ink (I like brown ink). It took quite a few coats of drybrushed red to build up an acceptably 'bright' finish and once this was complete the real fun began. The bags, chain, gloves etc were picked out in black (again) and a combination of drybrushed enamel and ink/acrylic was used to finish these off. Brown ink is very useful stuff.

Looking at the cover I then made a small plasticene model of John Blanche and stuck pins in it. The checks on his original illustration were a bit of a problem. Eventually a series of black oblongs done with a technical drawing pen over stripes of yellow enamel seemed to do the trick. The 'stars' were spotted using the end of a sharpened cocktail stick.

A totally enamel painted figure - and probably my favourite - is the Samurai: *Jade's Warrior*. Most of this figure was done in 'semi-drybrushing'. If you don't wipe all the paint off the brush first but leave it slightly damp and then drybrush you can get some interesting effects. This does take a fair bit of practice as it can result in a very streaky finish if it goes wrong.

The skeletons were rather different: they actually started off with a white undercoat! The bone effect is a mixed wash of yellow and (you guessed it) brown ink. An off-white enamel was drybrushed over this and the eye sockets were picked out with black. The shields were done with acrylics over a white base and took about five times longer than the rest of the figures!

Fig.1 Limited Edition Kinky Chaosette & Companion C35 Warrior.
Fig.2 A Samurai Lord from the Oriental Heroes range.
Fig.3 C17 Skeletons.
Fig.4 Guest appearance of members of the Skeleton Horde.
Fig.5 The Fimir.
Fig.6 Lepracaun, Gladiator & Ranger from the Talisman Range.
Fig.7 C17 Skeletons.
Fig.8 The Zoat.
Fig.9 Rogue, Amazon & Necromancer from the Talisman Range.
Fig.10 C47 Chaos Ratmen.
Fig.11 Manticore.
Fig.12 C03 Clerics.
Fig.13 Paladins (F1).
Fig.14 Judge Dredd & Judge Death (JD1).
Fig.15 CH5 Chaos Sorcerers.
Fig.16 Hobgoblin, Satyr & Toad from the Talisman Range.
Fig.17 ADD79 Mindflayer.
Fig.18 ADD69 Githyanki.
Fig.19 ADD64 Troglodytes.
Fig.20 Skragg the Slaughter (C23) & Goblinfriends (C12)
Fig.21 Ogre Chieftan (C23).

Fig.13

Fig.14

Fig.15

Fig.16

Fig.17

Fig.18

Fig.19

Fig.21

Fig.20

As to the photographs... I use two 75 watt photoflood bulbs to give the main lighting. These are positioned at roughly 45 degrees either side of the model, and the background is lit by a 150 watt photoflood. This is angled a little so that some of its light falls on the top of the model. Photofloods give a slightly 'whiter' light than an ordinary household blub, which is why I use them. A meter reading is taken from a Kodak grey card at the point where the model will stand.

Even with the photofloods white light, I still use a colour correction filter to reduce any yellow 'cast' in the photgraph itself. To get close enough to the figure I also use an extension tube which allows the camera to focus within 6-8 inches. Normally, the closest a standard lnes will allow you to get is 15-18 inches - this is too far away to be of much use for either a single figure or a small group. The camera itself is set up on a tripod and the shutter is operated by the self-timer. This stops camera shake which would blur the final result.

Finally, I know some of you have been writing in asking how us famous *'Eavy Metal* artists achieve some of the colours we use. The Games Workshop figure painters, like John Blanche and Colin Dixon, have been using the following colour chart for Citadel paints. I'm sure you'll find it useful too.

And all that, just for an *'Eavy Metal...*

Phil Lewis

COLOUR REQUIRED	BASE COLOUR	COLOURS TO WASH WITH	COLOUR(S) TO DRY-BRUSH WITH
Bright Red	Red Gore	Imperial Purple-Blood Red Mix	Red-Gore-Sunburst Yellor or White Mix
Crimson	Blood Red	Imperial Purple	Red Gore
Orange	Hobgoblin Orange	Blood Red or Swamp Brown	Hobgoblin Orange Sunburst Yellow Mix
Golden Yellow	Sunburst Yellow	Sunburst Yellow Hobgoblin Orange Mix	Sunburst Yellow
Yellow	Sunburst Yellow	Sunburst Yellow + Slight Touch of Swamp Brown	Sunburst Yellow + White
White	Skull White	Skull White + Elf Grey or Bronzed Flesh	Skull White
Grey	Elf Grey	Ghoul Grey	Skull White
Black	Chaos Black	—	Skull Black + Woodland Green or Enchanted Blue or Ghoul Grey
Purple	Imperial Purple	Imperial Purple + Moody Blue	Imperial Purple + Skull White
Bright Green	Bilious Green	Woodland Green	Bilious Green + Skull White
Dark Green	Woodland Green	Woodland Green + Moody Blue	Bilious Green
Drab Green	Goblin Green	Woodland Green + Swamp Brown	Goblin Green + Skull White or Sunburst Yellow
Flesh	Bronzed Flesh	Swamp Brown	Bronzed Flesh + Skull White
Dark Blue	Moody Blue	Moody Blue + Black	Enchanted Blue
Mid Blue	Electric Blue	Enchanted Blue	Electric Blue + Skull White
Bronze	Brozen Bronze	Brazen Bronze + Swamp Brown	Shining Gold
Iron	Chainmail	Chaos Black + Moody Blue	Mityril Silver
Tan	Hobgoblin Orange	Swamp Brown	Hobgoblin Orange + Sunburst Yellow
Rich Brown	Swamp Brown	Swamp Brown + Chaos Black	Swamp Brown + Hobgoblin Orange
Dull Brown	Bestial Brown	Bestial Brown + Chaos Black	Bestial Brown + Skull White

ANYWHEN

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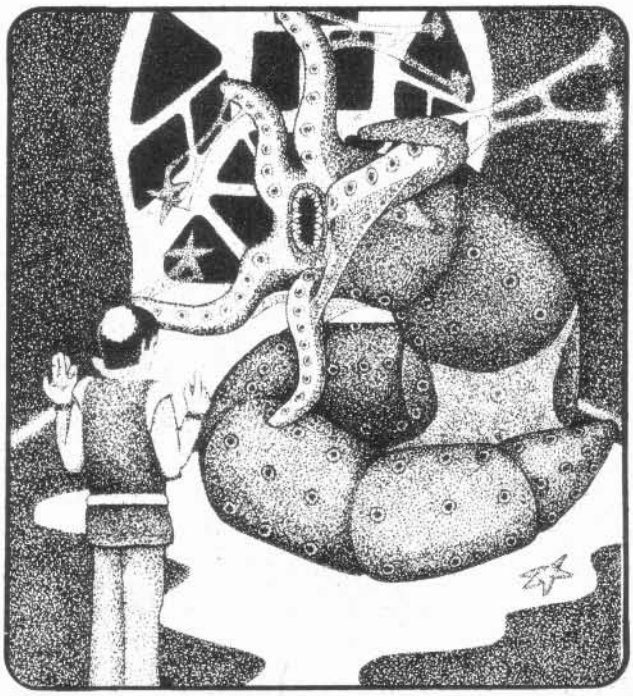
Even before the night had fallen, they came back; hordes of mutated creatures, demons and ghosts, armed with rifles and grenades by their master, the insane sorcerer Black Wolf. Teinquerion watched his friend ready another arrow and take aim at the closest mutant; for nearly two days now, they had fought back attack after attack on this lonely crag of rock, and the elf still did not show any signs of fatigue. Teinquerion, human by birth and fighter by trade, thought back on all the fiends he had vanquished in his life. He remembered the giants that had raided his homeland, smashing entire houses with their bare hands, the wars between the Free States, the soldiers who fought with steel and the merchants who fought with gold, the witch-king he had defeated in single combat, and so many others. He had fought all his life, against swords and against spells... and now against machines. An elf screamed to his left, flung off the crag by machine gun fire, dead before he hit the ground; hiddeous creatures threw themselves on him, swinging blood encrusted axes and maces. Teinquerion blocked the first one's blow, and riposted with his longsword, slashing deep in the mutated flesh; the creature howled, falling on his comerades who were still scaling up the crag. As the elves fought on and the mutants fell back, Teinquerion began to hope that he might live to see another day, in the grim world of **Fireland** . . .



The gigantic worm shaped creature drunkenly slithered forward, dripping toxic slime as it reared its tentacled head towards Father Vicente. A deep throbbing sound came from it, followed by the translator's metallic voice: "Explain to me again exactly what it is you mean by immaculate conception, priest-human." Father Vicente stepped back, trying to avoid the noxious amonia vapours the thing was releasing; he had been given poor assignments by the New Vatican cardinals, but never quite so bad. Nevertheless, alliance with these creatures would give the Holy Empire enough power to defeat the imperial cities of earth, and free thousands of star systems. He somehow had to convince this alien monster that Pope Catherine represents God in the universe, and siding with her would mean glory not only in this world but in heaven; Father Vicente struggled to find the right words. "It's something like that, the Holy Spirit is..." Father Vicente never finished his sentence, as the salvo of nuclear missiles hit his ship vaporizing him and the Outworlder ambassador. Thousands of miles away, aboard a strike cruiser of the imperial city of Tucsan, an officer grinned as the sensors reported a direct hit. There would be no negotiations this time; New Vatican would have to fight alone against the might of **IMPERIAL EARTH...**

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ONWARDS & UPWARDS

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT IN WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY

by

GRAEME DAVIS

Along with Fate Points (discussed last issue), character advancement seems to be the area of the *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* rules which people have some trouble coming to grips with - at any rate, we've had more letters about character advancement than any other rules query. This is an attempt to clarify matters.

Characters collect experience points, which they trade in (normally in blocks of 100 EPs at a time) to buy skills and characteristic advances from the advance schemes of their current career, or to change from their current scheme to a new career. I'll go through this bit by bit, covering the most common questions that we've had.

·EXPERIENCE POINTS·

Awarding Experience Points
Experience Points are the basic currency which makes the character advance system work. A number of people who have had trouble working out how many experience points to award in any given situation, in the absence of any hard-and-fast mechanical system like the xp values in *D&D/AD&D*. When we were designing the game, we deliberately steered away from this kind of mechanism for two reasons:

First, we wanted to allow the GM the freedom to reward good roleplaying and bright ideas, rather than having experience tied inextricably to combat;

Second, we wanted to avoid the kind of situation which we had all seen in other games, where a character thinks 'Hmm. I need 10 experience points to reach the next level. Those two peasants over there are worth 7 xp each. Where's my sword?' If experience is too firmly linked to combat, then people will tend to prefer violent options because they don't get experience - or not as much experience - for anything else.

Following the notes on pp90-91 of the *WFRP* rule book and using published adventures such as *The Enemy Within, Shadows Over Bogenhafen* and *Night of Blood* (WD 87) as examples, you should have little trouble in breaking your own adventures down into major and minor objectives, and from here it is fairly straightforward to decide how many EPs to award for each objective. In addition to experience awarded for achieving objectives, you should never be afraid to award a few extra points for good roleplaying and good ideas along the way, or to deduct a few for acting out of character or making idiotic mistakes. After a couple of games, you will soon develop a 'feel' for how much experience to award in a particular situation.

Spending Experience Points
Experience Points in WFRP can be used for four things: characteristic advances, acquiring skills, changing careers, and - in the case of spellcasters - acquiring spells.

·THE ADVANCE SCHEME·

One of the things a character can do with experience points is increase a characteristic on his current advance scheme. An advance costs 100 EPs, and the scale of the advance depends on the characteristic involved.

Characteristics which are on a percentile scale - *Weapon Skill* (**WS**), *Ballistic Skill* (**BS**), *Initiative* (**I**), *Dexterity* (**Dex**), *Leadership* (**Ld**), *Intelligence* (**Int**), *Cool* (**Cl**), *Will Power* (**WP**) and *Fellowship* (**Fel**) - are increased 10 points at a time; 100 EPs buys a 10-point increase.

Other characteristics - *Movement* (**M**), *Strength* (**S**), *Toughness* (**T**), *Wounds* (**W**) and *Attacks* (**A**) are increased 1 point at a time; 100 EPs buys a 1-point increase.

A characteristic must be on the advance scheme for the character's current career before it can be increased.

Problems arise with multiple advances for a single characteristic in more than one career. Clem Shirestock (the sample character used all the way through the rule book) gets +10 **WS** as an Outrider. If he becomes, say, a Scout later on, the advance scheme has +20 **WS**. Does he have to pay 100 EPs again for the +10 before he can take the +20? The answer to this is no. A character only pays for advances which actually increase a characteristic. Similarly, if a character moves into a career whose advance scheme includes an advance which has already been taken (for example, the +1 **S** in the advance schemes for both Outrider and Scout), the characteristic cannot be advanced further in this career, and the character does not spend any EPs on that characteristic.

Having got +10 WS from his Outrider career (taking his **WS** score from 28 to 38), Clem becomes a Scout, which has +20 **WS** on the advance scheme. Does this mean that he can increase his **WS** by 20 points in this career? Again, the answer is no. The figures on the advance scheme represent the maximum increase over the starting score which can be gained by following that career. So, as a Scout, Clem can increase his **WS** to a maximum of 48.

·SKILLS·

A character starts the game with all the skills listed for the first career. Like the free advance, this reflects the fact that the character has been in this career for a while, and has already gained some of the benefits from it.

Skills from the second and subsequent careers must be bought with EPs, at the cost of 100 EPs per skill. The time spent training to acquire a skill is up to your campaign. According to your style of play, you may decide that a character can learn a skill between adventures, or that he must spend several weeks of game time learning and training. Choose whichever suits you and your players best.

A character doesn't have to obtain the skills for a career before he moves into it. The trappings are another matter. Skills are acquired during the career in the same way as characteristic advances. They are not obtained beforehand like trappings. It's a matter of common sense really - you need blacksmithing tools in order to become a blacksmith for example, and you can't work as a blacksmith without them. On the other hand, you will only pick up the relevant skills as you work at the job.

·TRAPPINGS·

In order to move to a second or subsequent career, a character always has to acquire the necessary trappings. In some cases, the listed trappings can take quite a bit of effort to obtain - a ship and crew for the Sea Captain, for example, or trading capital of 2500 Gold Crowns for the Merchant. In these cases, you may (as the GM) rule that it is not necessary to obtain all the trappings, although a character may have trouble making a living as a Sea Captain without a ship! As

Illustrated by John Blanche

always, you can alter or ignore any rules you like to make the game fit with the group's style of play.

·CAREER CHANGES·

You always pay 100 EPs to change a career. The only exception to this is in the case of spellcasters, who are covered later on.

In some cases, you have to complete the career (ie take every advance from the advance scheme and acquire all the listed skills) before you move on to another career. In others you don't have to stay in a career any longer than it takes you to earn the 100 EPs necessary to move on. As a rule of thumb, where the second career is a logical extension of the first (eg Artisan from Artisan's Apprentice, Sergeant from Soldier or Mercenary, Physician from Physician's Student), it is necessary to complete the first career before moving on to the second. In other cases, such as moving from Boatman to Outlaw, it is not necessary to complete the first career; the character can move on as soon as he has acquired as many skills and advances as he wants and accumulated the 100 EPs necessary to change careers.

There are four options open to a character who wishes to change careers:

1. Take one of the listed Career Exits for the current career (this may involve completing the old career first);

2. Move to a basic career of the player's choice within the same career class (Warrior, Ranger, Rogue, Academic);

3. Make one roll on the Career Chart (*WFRP* p18) for another career class of the player's choice.

4 Choose a basic career from another career class — this costs 200 EP.

·NOBLES - A SPECIAL CASE·

The inclusion of the Noble in the list of basic careers has led to a couple of problems. In theory, it should be a basic career, since it is possible for a character to be born into a noble family. However some special rules are needed to cover non-noble characters becoming Nobles. At present, any Warrior may become a Noble at a cost of 100 EPs - even a Labourer or a Pit Fighter - and it seems more reasonable to suggest that Nobles should be an exception to options 2 and 3 above. Using option 2, a Warrior character may not choose to become a Noble, and in option 3, a result which indicates that a character has moved to the Noble career should be rerolled.

I would suggest that characters who are not born into the nobility (ie those who don't have Noble as their first career) cannot later become Nobles unless they are elevated to the nobility by the Emperor, the local Grand Duke or someone in a comparable position of authority. This should happen only rarely, and only in recognition of great deeds.

·SPELLCASTERS·

Spellcasters are also a special case, and pay more to ascend the various levels of their profession (see the tables on *WFRP* pp136/149). In addition to skills and career changes, spellcasters also spend EPs on learning spells, as explained on pp136-7/149. The notes on acquiring spells are fairly self-explanatory, and do not need expanding on here. In all other respects, character advancement for spellcasters is the same as for other careers.

Career advances are just a matter of common sense. And, as with all the rules for *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*, you are free to come up with any amendments or additions to the rules you like. If you end up with a system that you're happy with, and that your players are happy with, that's all that matters at the end of the day.

Illuminations

Brett Ewins

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Brett is currently going strong with 2000AD's *Bad Company*, work for *White Dwarf* such as *A Night in the Death of Sector 255* and Games Workshop's *Blood Bowl, Chainsaw Warrior* and the forthcoming *Block Mania* boardgame.

John Blanche

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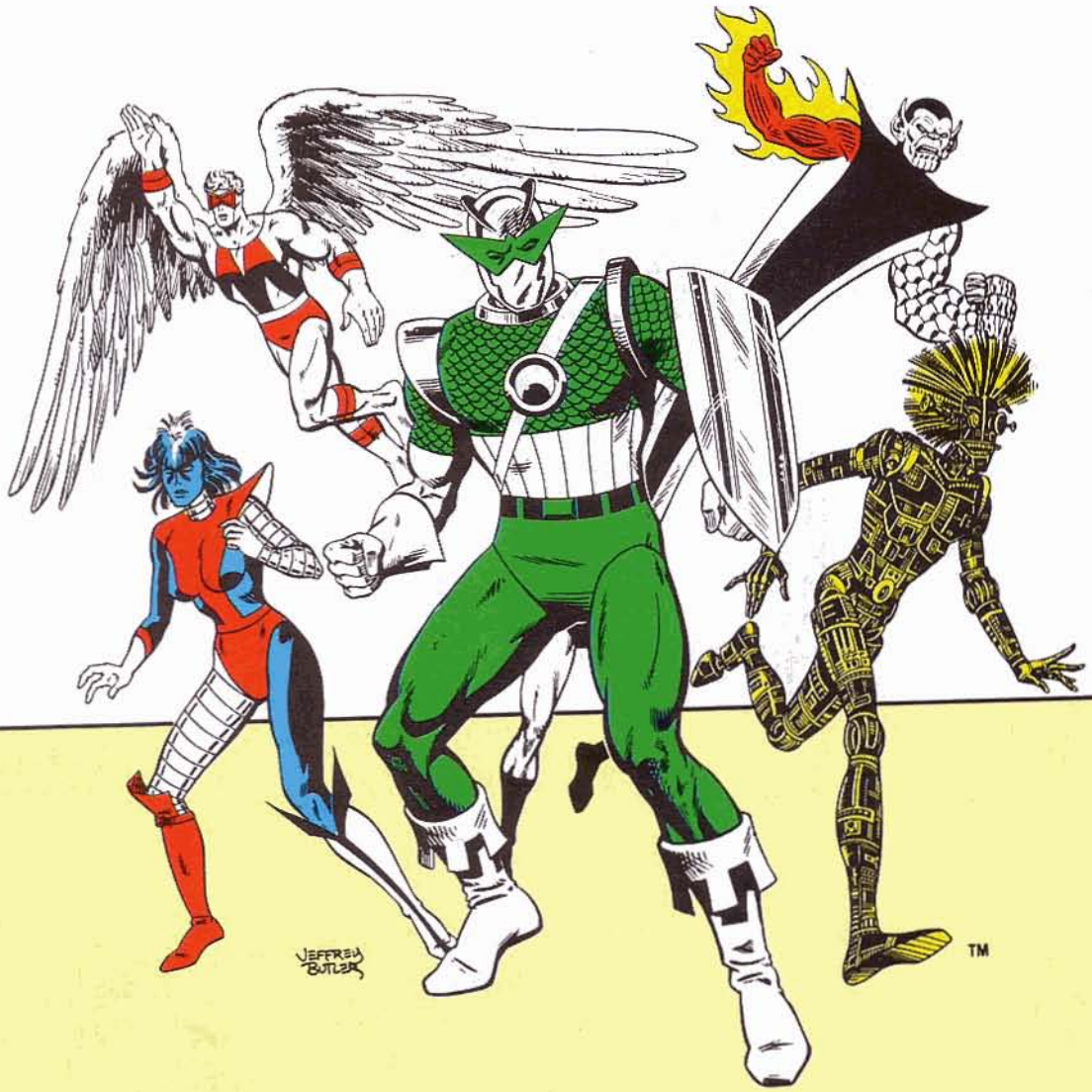

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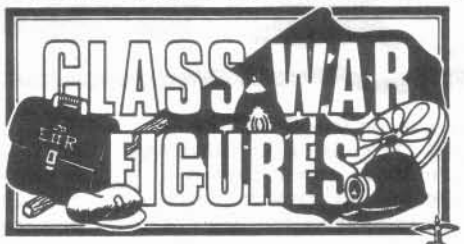

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ARCANA or ERRATA

The changes made to *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* in the *Unearthed Arcana* volume are now definitely affecting the way the game is played. Even though most reactions to *UA* are negative and critical, the rules changes are altering game play - thus, one of my own GMs thinks the book is a real stinker, but he still allows players to use new spells in the book. My experience is that bits and pieces of *UA* rules are affecting almost all AD&D campaigns these days. Add to this the fact that TSR's modules and game accessories will now be tailored to fit *UA* rules changes and it's plain that the book cannot be ignored any longer.

Without doubt some *UA* revisions are badly thought-out and obviously destructive to game balance. So, on the reasonable assumption that no-one plays AD&D by all the rules in the books (for example, I've never seen any group use the rules for adjusting different weapon 'to hit' rolls as a function of opponent AC), I'm going to try to isolate the key areas of *UA* which cause problems for AD&D game logic and balance. Before doing this, however, I'd like to get one thing straight: I greatly prefer AD&D to other RPGs. I'm trying to signpost the major problems and give suggestions for dealing with them.

Listing the *UA* elements which are mostly OK helps us to see the key problem areas more easily. The new spells, new magic items, new weapons and the like are mostly fine. If there is a problems, it's surely with the introduction of the new field plate and full plate armour types. It's now possible for a character without any magic items to have an AC of −4, and that is surely far too good an AC - quite a bit better than your average major devil, in fact. The GM's Section of *UA* tries to wriggle off this hook by stating that such stuff is rare and usually used by cavaliers and paladins, and that it is 'only rarely donned by adventuring rangers, barbarians and clerics'. Why? These armour types weigh little more than ordinary plate mail, are actually less bulky and, while very expensive, they are affordable. Ideal for a dungeon bash, and clerics in particular should fancy protection this good and strive to get it. Cavaliers and paladins notwithstanding, GMs would be well advised not permit field or full plate in campaigns. Without question, GMs should never allow PCs to get their gauntleted paws on any magical armour of this type.

However, balancing the odd glitch like this are related rules revisions which make sense. Thieves can now wear any armour type; armour better than leather will incur penalities to thieving functions. Still, the new system makes good sense, and if you can get it, the superior AC protection afforded by elfin chain is probably worth the penalties to some thief abilities. I'm concentrating on *UA* problems here, but this shouldn't get too one-sided. *UA* lifts an illogical restriction on thieves and gives clear rules for their use of diverse armour types.

Progressing beyond this kind of fine tuning of AD&D, where there is nothing which significantly alters game balance (save for the armour problem), we find that almost everything worrying in *UA* concerns characters, and it starts at the very beginning, when you grab those six-siders.

Roll Up! Roll Up!

Arcana lists a new method for generating human PCs (the notorious 'Method V') in which you just select the PC class you fancy, roll lots of dice, and if you somehow don't get any minimum statistics you need, don't worry! You can have them anyway! So, goodbye to being delighted that you finally made the dice rolls for that ranger (or monk, or paladin, or whatever) you always wanted, because they'll be ten a penny in future. And you can be guaranteed of having a string of high numbers; a fighter, is it? Choose the best three of 9d6 for Strength, 8d6 for Constitution, and 7d6 for Dexterity! You even get the best three of 6d6 for Charisma, for heaven's sake. In the long run this is going to be very destructive to the game; when every human PC has a string of 17/18 scores, no-one is special. Or perhaps they might be...

...because very close to the beginning, *UA* tabulates demi-human PC class level limits as a function of prime requisite scores — in the tables these scores are listed up to 22! But don't feel inhibited by that. The book says that under exceptional circumstances, they can go higher than this. This will unquestionably stimulate certain players into pressurizing their GMs to let their PCs have outrageous ability scores - and don't forget that, as *Legends and Lore* makes clear, scores of 19+ mean immunity to certain spells, regeneration of hit points, and similar over-powered consequences. What *UA* has done is to incite the equivalent of Monty Haul gaming in the realm of ability scores. This is a disaster. GMs should not allow 19+ ability scores - characters who achieve the same may attract the attention of demigods or worse who may be very offended by such hubris. Perhaps just one 19 should be allowed for a very high-level PC who has performed some great service for a deity at great personal risk. Let's face it, if 18 is no longer a clear limit and can be exceeded by mortal magic, then the only possible limit now is 25. We'll have PCs with the ability scores of gods. *Arcana* is positively inviting this.

Yet *UA* also introduced the 'minimum starting hit points' rule, so that a first-level PC has at least the average (rounded up) hit points for the first hit dice. Many GMs have done this sort of thing before, of course, but it's good that it's official. It bewilders me that one can find this sensible rule right after the gross Method V. On the latter, surely GMs should stick with best-three-of-4d6 and allow players to rearrange scores as desired, which is common.

And finally, we now have some extra dice to roll, for the pointless new attribute of Comeliness. This ultra-superficial attribute is only of real significance with regard to the rules pertaining to the fascinate-like effect of high or even mediocre (14+) Comeliness scores. The rules for applying this are too vague (for deciding how long the effect lasts), the threshold for the effect is too low, and the rules ignore the fact that beauty is in the eye of the beholder and that exceptionally handsome people can arouse reactions of jealousy and dislike in others rather than fascination. Comeliness only confuses the issue of Charisma further - this has always been an amalgam of beauty, charm, and forcefulness of character. *Warhammer Fantasy Role Play* surely got matters right here with the distinction between Leadership and Fellowship (general social skills) scores, and something like this is surely what AD&D needed. GMs should really ignore Comeliness, and base initial NPC reactions to PCs on Charisma and even more on what PCs say, how they say it, and the circumstances of the encounter.

Cavaliers and their Chums

Having dealt with the new races in an earlier piece (WD85) I'll only deal with the new character classes here. There are many problems with them, some of which are by no means obvious. Although the barbarian has attracted most criticism, the cavalier class arguably creates more problems.

The general description of the cavalier class appears sound (if over-specialized) save that the minimum statistics needed are rather excessive - for the paladin, now a sub-class of the cavalier, they are very high indeed. And

they will get higher, because alone of all classes the cavalier can improve ability scores. As each level is gained there are fractional improvements to Strength, Dexterity and Constitution which eventually accumulate to integral improvements. I think it's a shame that only cavaliers got this bonus, and it would have made sense to allow all characters to improve key statistics like this. Admittedly, the cavalier has to exercise, drill, etc, to get this benefit but surely the poor old fighter might have been allowed to do this as well. Why can't other fighter-types learn these exercises? Anyway, be that as it may, where this system completely falls down is in allowing ability scores to rise to 18/00 - even is this violates race and sex limits. A female elf as a fighter is very restricted in maximum level attain-able and can have only a maximum Strength of 16. As a cavalier the same female elf can reach any experience level and attain a Strength of 18/00. This is ridiculous and offends 'fantasy logic' as well as any sense of realism. How come using a lance and espousing the code of the cavalier suddenly gives our lady elf this unlimited expansion over her potential as a fighter? Is it reasonable that this willowy five-stone elf can attain the physical strength of a Schwartzenegger? Daft, isn't it?

The cavalier also comes equipped with a range of special abilities and protections which seem very arbitary, for which no kind of justifying explanation is offered, and which seem overpowered. The first of these is the unique ability of cavaliers of good alignments to stay conscious, treat their wounds, etc, at negative hit point totals when other characters would be out for the count. The many problems raised by this one ability suggest that the implications of this were never thought through. first, why only good cavaliers? Why should alignment affect what looks, on the face of it, to be a clearly physical factor of toughness and if it isn't, why doesn't *UA* explain this talent? Second, *UA* states that the negative hit point limit at which the cavalier can stay conscious corresponds to hit point total at first level, and states that this is 4-13. Actually, it's 4-17 if one takes possible Constitution bonus into account. In any case, this goes beyond the normal limit at which characters die - at -10 hit points! Now this really is rather extraordinary, and *UA* doesn't discuss it. I'd hazard a guess that the authors simply overlooked this, but it really does give the cavalier a phenomenal defensive edge. Why?

Cavaliers get other benefits too. They radiate *protection from fear 10' radius* and are themselves immune to fear if of good alignment. I think that is rather overdoing it and that the effect on those around them might well have been restricted to certain battle situations. They save at +2 vs illusions (now this really is pulling a rabbit out of a game designer's hat) and have an over-powered 90% resistance to many forms of mental magic (surely 50% would have been generous). Balancing all this is the cavalier's code of conduct

Illustrated by Pete Knifton

- death before dishonour, be a male chauvinist pig, that sort of thing. Some of the strictures are disadvantageous, like armour being a sign of rank and forcing the cavalier to stick with his plate mail in preference to the +5 chain mail he finds. The GM is rightly urged to debit xps if this code of conduct isn't adhered to. It seems clear the idea is to balance the class benefits against chivalric restrictions. Sadly, it often doesn't work like this; players bend the rules and the code only gets lip service. And since some of the cavalier's commandments verge on the suicidal - all the stuff about charging the most powerful monsters on sight - it's hard to be harsh on a player who doesn't observe all the strictures. After all, he might fancy gaining a level or two and developing the character...

Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay surely got matters right... with the distinction between Leadership and Fellowship...

What we see with the cavalier is a largely needless class, peppered with piecemeal abilities added on with little apparent concern for game logic or balance, some of which have implications for the whole AD&D game system. Some of these are not discussed at all, and threaten to make a pig's ear of the game. In the unlikely event that I would permit a cavalier in a campaign, I'd not permit ability advancement, functioning at negative hit point totals, and I'd have to rethink the saving throw bonuses, etc. Other GMs can decide for themselves, but one point is worth keeping in mind. If you introduce the cavalier into a campaign, when the special abilities are explained any thinking player will ask, 'Why?' And all you're going to be able to say is 'Because the book says so' there certainly isn't any game logic involved here.

Pass the Quiche

The barbarian class has attracted a lot of criticism, much of it based on the prototype version published in *Dragon* and *Imagine*. The consensus was that the class was too powerful, although because of the very slow level advancement this point may have been overstated. Checking the statistic bonuses again shows that the doubled-up Dexterity bonus isn't really so bad since it only applies if non-bulky armour is worn, which effectively means leather (I don't think elfin chain comes in the barbarian size). What is too much, though, is the monstrous doubled-up Constitution bonus, on top of the uniquely high base d12 for hit points. A better compromise would have been +2 points per die for 15 Con, +4 for 16, +5 for 17, and +6 for 18. GMs might consider this modification for their own campaigns.

The aligment restrictions on barbarians - no Lawful alignments - seem to betray only the prejudices of the AD&D authors, with their apparent predilictions for applying a largely romaticized 'American frontiersman' psychology to the game. In point of fact, most cultures like those of barbarians as described in *UA* and the *World of Greyhawk* tend to be highly cohesive, with strong leaders, powerful taboos, and rigid systems of tribal rules, rituals, and regulations. Chaos is a luxury of self-indulgence unaffordable by folk living in harsh and hostile environments, even if individuals are self-reliant, hunter-gatherer types. Barbarians should be of a non-Chaotic alignment or, perhaps, unrestricted.

Rather like the cavalier, the barbarian has a range of special abilities and talents, but at least in this case one can see why. Not that some of them aren't distinctly unbalanced - like being able to hit creatures which can usually be hit only by +5 or better weapons. This does seem to be going too far. But the major problems are actually to do with NPC barbarians. First, a PC barbarian when dealing with other barbarians has an effective Charisma equal to his normal Charisma plus his level of experience. This is highly implausible and unbalanced.

It's unbalanced because there appears to be no upper limited to this effective Charisma, and indeed *UA* discusses an example where this is 23 or more. God-like statistics again.

It's implausible that this effect should influence *any* NPC barbarians, especially if they've never heard of the PC and are wholly indifferent, or even hostile, to the PC's tribe.

This problem is exacerbated when one adds the awesome Charisma of the barbarian to the ability, gained at eighth level, of summoning an enormous barbarian horde to help him out with quests: at least 275 of them for at least two months - and many more for a longer time at higher levels. It appears that the large bulk of this horde is just first level, although the rules on this aren't explicit, and *UA* forgets to state just how often the barbarian can do this. But the whole idea is preposterous

this. But the whole idea is preposterous in any case. Got a tiresome adventure? Don't bother, just send out for Rent-A-Mob and use the *Battlesystem*. Pointless, isn't it?

The special talents of the barbarian (*running, animal handling,* etc) seem OK, although they could do with being integrated into the proficiency system of the Survival Guides in the long-discussed rewrite of the AD&D rule-books. What isn't alright is the way in which restrictions on the barbarian have been relaxed in the *UA* version of this character class: the use of magic and associating with characters who use it. These restrictions originally gave the barbarian class a meaningful cultural identity and balanced the major advantages barbarians had over ordinary fighters. The piecemeal, fudged way in which these restrictions are lifted is testimony to the failure of the original conception of the class, which was pretty obvious anyway - what future is there for a character class suspicious of clerics and openly hostile to magic-users? Even the revisions are badly thought-out: at 10th level, barbarians can use 'most magic items available to fighters'. Presumably this means *usable* by fighters. What does 'most' mean? Which ones can't be used? Slack attention to relevant detail - we deserve better than this.

The barbarian class is a stinker, a real disaster. Barbarians make good NPCs for sadistic GMs setting up fights because you can give them ridiculous hit point totals, but that's about the limit of their usefulness. Mind you, GMs are going to need this sort of 'monster', when we see what weapon specializtion has done to the game.

Thieves and Acrobats

Without any comment on the change, *UA* slipped in a radical rules change for thieves. Their alignment requirement is altered from any neutral to any non-good. You missed this? See page 7. This is psychologically implausible and bad for the game. The system still permits thieves to be Lawful Neutral (the least credible alignment imaginable) whilst eliminating the last possibility for a 'steal from the rich, give to the poor' type, ie Neutral Good. It's bad for the game because thieves have always been objects of suspicion in many parties anyway and this will only make matters worse, making co-operative role-playing that much more difficult. A common (and much better) convention used by many gamers, which *UA* would have done well to make official, is that thieves can be of any non-Lawful alignment. That would leave Neutral Good and the obvious Chaotic Good options available. Result: more co-operative gaming.

There's relatively little to say about thief-acrobats, other than to suggest that the abilities of the thief-acrobat hardly warranted the creation of a new sub-class. They could surely have been added on as extra thief skills; they're not special and the thief class isn't over-powered as it stands. It seems odd to me that the thief-acrobat - who looks a definite townie and potentially a nifty cat-burgler - should be unable to progress in his *open locks* skill (pretty useful for a cat-burglar). And when it comes to dungeoneering time, an ordinary thief is going to be preferred by any adventuring party that knows what it's doing, since the thief-acrobat makes no progress with the *find/remove traps* skills either. Arguably an over-specialized class.

Weapon Specialization - Overkill

Dragon 66 introduced the weapon specialization system which remained virtually unchanged in *UA*. However, in *Dragon* only fighters were allowed weapon specialization. 'Fighters have too long been the last-choice class...'; undeniably so - who would prefer an ordinary fighter to a ranger, for example? 'Therefore, weapon specialization applies only to fighters, excluding all sub-classes'.

If weapon specialization hadn't been so over-the-top, this would have been good for game balance and a tolerable rationale could have been given. Cavaliers, rangers and barbarians all have diverse secondary abilities and skills which need practice, leaving the fighter more time for the intensive training which weapon specialization obviously requires. So, the whole point about weapon specialization was that it was for fighters only. The *UA* rules promptly permitted cavaliers and paladins weapons of choice (a weak version of weapon specialization) and gave the full benefits of weapon specialization to fighters and rangers. So much for logic and consistency. Frankly, if there was a character class which hardly needed any more advantages, it was the ranger.

But how much difference does weapon specialization actually make? Lots. To show how much, we need a simple example - a first-level fighter trying to hit one enemy of AC5. We'll assume that the fighter has 17 Strength and 16 Dexterity (these assumptions don't affect the logic, only the specifics, of the examples here). Further, let's assume that a nonmagical longsword is being used against a non-large enemy. In the old system, the fighter got one attack per round, needed 14 or better (on a d20) to hit, and the damage on a successful hit was d8+1. The average damage per round our fighter metes out is 1.925 hp. With specialization, the fighter gets 3 attacks per 2 rounds, hits on 13 or better, and successful hits do d8+3. The average damage per round now is 4.50 hp, fully 234% of the old figure.

Now let's consider the same fighter using a longbow against enemies closing to melee, so that one short-range and one point-blank shot are possible. By simple calculations like those for the longsword, we find that previously the average damage per round was 2.45 hp but with weapon specialization it is now 6.80 hp, 278% of the old value! Two enemies within the point-blank range could mean that the fighter can loose off two arrows at targets in this range category for an average damage of a monstrous 10.8 hp, 441% of the old average damage figure. And if the fighter has exceptional strength, this rises to over 500% - that's right, a five-fold increase in offensive power. And with missile weapons, these problems get worse with increasing experience levels, because weapon specialists alone get extra, increased fire rates.

Of course, a fighter (or ranger) can only be specialized in the use of one weapon, but then how many fighters use more than one melee and one missile weapon regularly? Any rules revision which doubles, triples, even quintuples (or worse) the offensive powers of fighters must be greatly altering game balance - so either it's too easy for PCs now or it was much too tough before. The most intriguing thing is that some designers have realized how disastrous weapon specialization is very quickly. In *Dragon 66* Gygax informs the reader how the concept originated in discussions between himself and Len Lakofka, but in issue 104 - probably before the ink had dried on the 'Additions and Corrections' pages for *UA* - Lakofka was penning his suggestions for watering down the weapon specialization rules. One of these is that if you are going to experiment with weapon specialization, introduce the changes a little at a time. But really, GMs would be much better not allowing them at all. Because if you do, you will have to increase the number of enemies facing the PCs to preserve game balance, and your carefully-learned intuitive feeling for what is fair combat will be worthless. The specialization rules - particularly those pertaining to bows, which are now much more dangerous than anything so puny as a two-handed sword - are very dangerously unbalanced and, if a more sensible version of them is developed, it should be for fighters only. After all, wasn't this originally the whole point of weapon specialization?

Unearthed Arcana is surely a tremendous disappointment for discriminating AD&D gamers. What was useful wasn't desperately needed, and the new races and classes and so much else are not only unnecessary but very destructive to game balance. It's very good to see that most players and GMs reject the bulk of *UA* rules and we don't have to suffer too many characters prepared by Method V, with ability scores of 18 and up, using weapon specialization to dump on everything in sight. In the end to use an analogy, English is not what's in a dictionary but rather the living language of most people. Writers of dictionaries are eventually forced to accept this and rewrite their books. If they won't, that's their problem - but gamers shouldn't be playing bad, unbalanced, rules revisions.

Allan Miles

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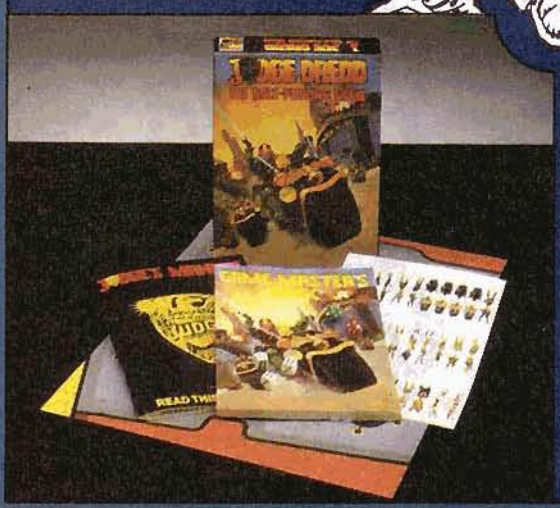

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The Cockatrice is another creature whose origin lie in the machinations of Chaos, and may be subject to many mutations. The most typical form is that of a huge, scaled chicken, with reptilian wings and a long, scaled neck and tail. Like all creatures of Chaos, the Cockatrice is rare, and found in infinite variety. They have been known to appear among the incursions of Chaos, but are generally solitary beings, living in high, desolate mountain areas or deep in gloomy forests and swamps.

Physique: Cockatrices are a blend of chicken and dragon, with reptilian wings and a long, scaly neck and tail. As creatures of Chaos, they can have several mutations altering this basic form.

World Distribution: Incursions of Chaos. Scattered individuals throughout the barren parts of the northern Old World.

Alignment: Chaos.

Base Size: 40 x 40mm.

Psychological Traits: Cause *Fear* in living creatures under 10 feet tall.

Special Rules: 2 *claw* attacks and 1 *beak*. The *beak* attack is at S 1, but any creature wounded by the *beak* attack must make a WP test or be turned to stone; the model is left on the table, and may become an obstruction, but may not move or perform any other action. You may find it useful to mark the petrified creature with a counter or a piece of plasticene as an aid to memory. Flies as *lander*.

Mutations: Any individual Cockatrice will have D6 mutations. A simple mutation table is given below; fuller details will be published in Realm of Chaos.

D6 roll	Mutation
1	Blood Rage - the Cockatrice is *subject to frenzy*.
2	Magic Resistant - WFB: the Cockatrice has a saving throw of 4, 5, or 6 against any magical attack; WFRP: the Cockatrice has a +10 bonus to all *Magic* tests.
3	Multiple Heads - the Cockatrice grows one or two extra heads (D6: 1-5 - one; 6 - two). There is a 50% chance that each new head will be a normal Cockatrice head, and a 50% chance that it will be the head of some other species.
4	Powerful Legs - the Cockatrice may make a normal move, then *leap* half as far again. It may *leap* over man-size or smaller troops.
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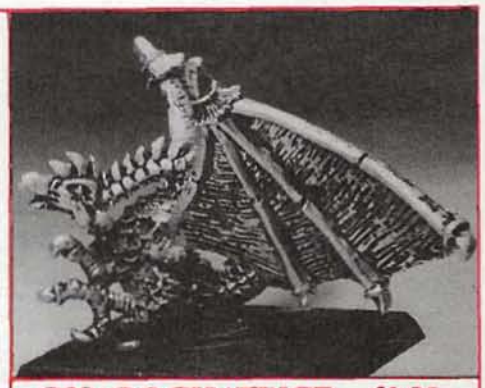

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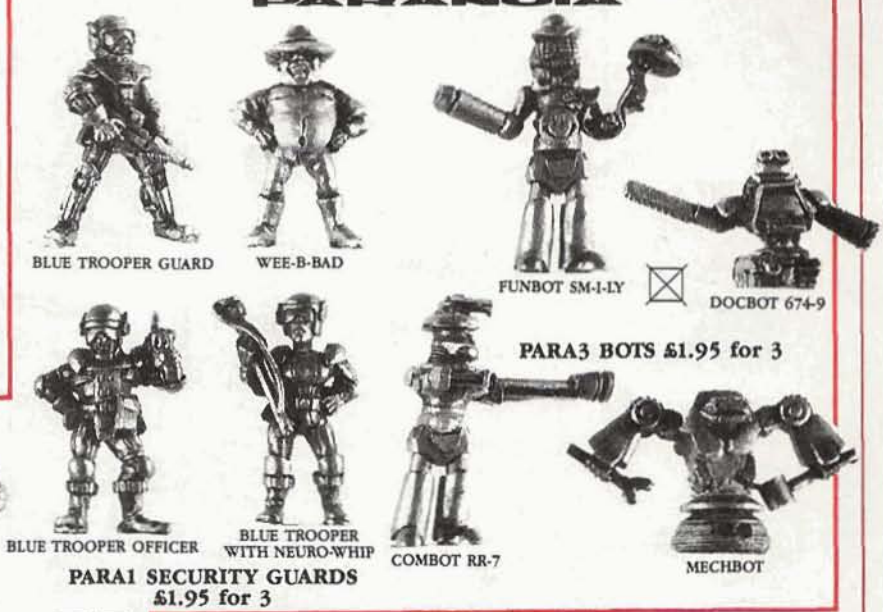

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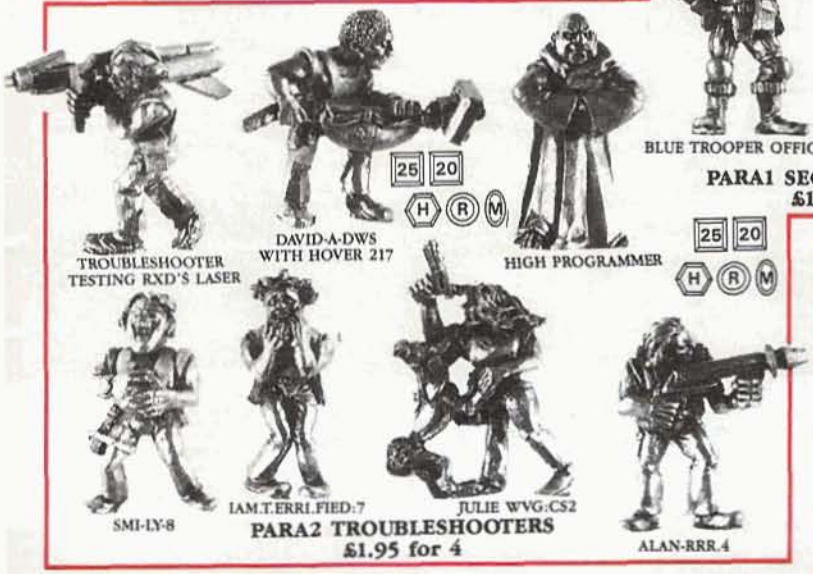

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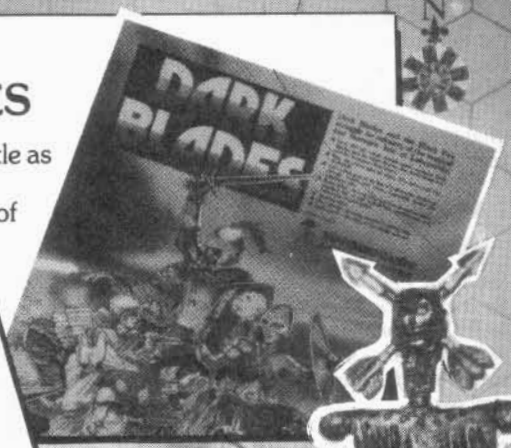

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GAMES WORKSHOP

As always, things went wrong last month. Help start an innocent discussion about elves, budgerigars and their respective heredity patterns, and...

Nigel Cole (the real one), Perth: This must be a new achievement: getting a letter in WD that I didn't even write! The letter in WD88, supposedly from me, is a fake...

Alex Whittaker, apprentice geneticist: Oh horridness.

Not only do you completely fail to put my name on my letter, you go the whole hog and put the name of the person with whom I was disagreeing.

Ha. Would that you were a man that I might take you into the street and mete out your deserts.

J Adams, Hucknall, Notts: Stuff genetics. This game is fantasy!

See what I mean? Reduced to a 'horridness' for a simple not-so-little mistake. The letter in WD88 from Nigel Cole of Perth was, in fact, from Alex Whittaker. Apologies to all concerned for the error. Seppuku is the only way out.

Robin Newton, Cambridge: Should *White Dwarf* have anything to do with boardgames? I don't mind if GW churn out formula boardgames in the manner of Waddingtons, but WD is a roleplaying magazine, and one of the original ideas of roleplaying was to escape form the restrictions of traditional boardgames.

*I can't see what the 'formula' of such diverse games as **Railway Rivals, Judge Dredd, Kings & Things*, Warrior Knights, Blood Bowl** and **Chainsaw Warrior** might be. Unless having boards counts... But wait, there's more in a similar vein:*

John Hannen, Swinton, Manchester: A quick glance at the front of your tergiversatory periodical informs me that *White Dwarf* is a 'roleplaying' magazine. This is a foul and misleading lie.

Looking through the pages I see adverts for boardgames (roleplaying?) and wargames (roleplaying?). There are also adverts for lead miniatures that could only be used in roleplaying as the product of some perverse and overactive imagination. Wargames involve no roleplaying at all. The only aims of the games are wholesale slaughter and mass genocide. Roleplaying games have been criticised for involving gratuitous violence but a blind eye has been turned to wargaming.

My main fear is that decent people will be turned away from roleplaying by this and that an undesirable element will be drawn to roleplaying by the mindless violence, thus killing off any hope of making the hobby acceptable to the British public.

*Tergiversatory, eh? Hmmm. Rushing off to the **Chambers 20th Century Dictionary** was partially enlighting. **White Dwarf** has always carried the occasional feature about boardgames: even WD1 had a feature about a boardgame called **Warlord**, (later to reappear as **Apocalypse**). I don't think **White Dwarf** has turned its back on roleplaying. We still publish the odd piece on the topic, you know. Not too many, of course, but then that might upset the people who read **White Dwarf** for all the features about motorbikes, windsurfing, photography and hi-fi...*

*I have to admit that I don't subscribe to the distinctions made between boardgames, wargames and roleplaying games. They are all games, and all can be enjoyable in different ways. It depends on whether I'm winning or not. You've obviously never played **Junta** and had attacks of 'OK, Gringo...' accents if you believe that boardgames and wargames don't bring out some serious roleplaying. However, to castigate wargamers for mass genocide sounds suspiciously like castigating roleplayers for devil worship - a prejudice getting the better of an argument.*

If you pick up a wargames magazine after it has included anything to do with fantasy or roleplaying you get a feeling of deja vu. Similar arguments are trotted out against the 'undesirable element' that is seen to be creeping up on decent historical wargamers - the dreaded roleplayers!

As to being acceptable, roleplaying has made it. Another perfectly good way to be nonconformist blown, I'm afraid.

And then:

Robin Newton, Cambridge (again): It said in the *Open Box* review of *Open Box* (WD88) - an editorial in disguise - that (and I quote): 'By definition, if GW publish a game or an adventure, or produce a figure (or three), it's because we think it's a good quality item.' Does this mean that if GW had been advertising a game for sale before it was ready or had paid IPC a large sum of money to produce some game, GW would just drop the game because they felt it was not of high enough quality? I think not, somehow. *OB* reviews of GW products are so obviously biased that I doubt if anyone would buy the products as a result. GW products may be good, but the reviews make them out to be perfect in every way, suitable for every gamer in the country.

S J Andrews, Carterton, Oxon: HA, HA, HA. You're joking, right? Well, it's still funny. You don't honestly expect us to believe, that because a game designer feels his game is the best thing since Narcissus that it *must* be true. If this is what you believe then why not ask other companies' designers to review their own products in the name of quality.

Of course you wouldn't be making games if you didn't think they were profitable... er, sorry, 'worthwhile' - but then neither would anyone else! Rather than self-congratulatory slobberings, shouldn't a game review enable potential buyers to gain an impression of the game's theme/mechanics or adventure plot?

Why not have a second opinion from someone who is adversely disposed to the product. If both reasons for liking and disliking a product are represented, however biased they are, then the potential buyer would benefit - ever heard of informed choice? Scarey, huh? But then if your goodies are as fab as you think they are then there is nothing to fear.

Well, I've just reviewed my letter and I think it's of extremely high quality, but then I'm biased... in favour of quality, of course.

I detect a note of sarcasm there.

*The whole purpose of the 'editorial' was to explain the policy behind **White Dwarf's** reviews. The point was that reviews of GW products would no longer be seen as 'reviews' in the traditional sense, but as designer's and developer's notes on the product. They obviously think that their work is good, and usually they have something interesting to say about it. The **Chainsaw Warrior** (WD88), **Rogue Trooper** and **Slaughter Margin** reviews (this issue) all try to make valid points. However, they do so without the hypocrisy of trying to appear 'independent' (whatever that means in this context). The intent was to say, in effect, 'This is our product, here's what we think makes it good, this is what's different about it...', which is surely the purpose of a review. We can't make independent quality judgements about our own work, so why bother?*

Reviewers usually get paid for their work, so by accepting money do they lose their independence? 'Independent' reviews still come under the editorial blue pencil at one stage or another. Surely it's better for us to actually stand up and say that we're biased, rather than pretend otherwise? Or maybe honesty isn't the best policy after all...

As to the other point, GW - and all other sensible game companies - do abandon and rework projects that don't come up to

scratch. One bad product can ruin reputations, while it takes several good ones to make a reputation.

But sometimes we please some of the people some of the time. The rest of the time:

Niall Chetwood, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire: In recent issues of the magazine (ie, 84-88) there have been two articles on *AD&D* and one adventure. This is despite the fact that it was the most played adventure system in the recent Readers' Poll. I can't believe that there is a lack of adventures for AD&D (or is there?), so I can only assume that it is an oversight on the part of the editorial team. Could anything in the line of an AD&D adventure be put in the Dwarf soon?

See the next issue.

Richard Adshead, Stockport, Manchester: As a roleplayer of many different games I hesitated at the thought of buying *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*. The reason for this was because of the fact that I have the mass combat rules. I feared the roleplaying system would be far too simple and thus leave out far too much detail which, in the past, I have found a good thing.

After purchasing the game I was impressed by the contents. The background to the world was more than sufficient for my needs. Overall when I bought the game I was satisfied that, at last, I had got value for money from Games Workshop.

Waddyamean 'at last'?

Then came the nasty surprise when I purchased *The Enemy Within*. I found that this pack contained yet more background info rather than adventure material, about ten times more. Because of the system itself, I still rated it overall as quite good, so yet again I put my money where my mouth is and bought *Shadows over Bögenhafen*. This one being improved from the first pack left me feeling happy and content, and hoping that the standard of *Death on the Reik* will be better still

Then came WD's own attempts at scenario aids for WFRP, the first of which I immediately called mediocre. But yet again, the second time an attempt was made I was left feeling satisfied to say the least. *Night of Blood* (WD87) was a simple idea that could be expanded beyond the normal encounter. A huge thanks to WD, a neat little idea.

In future I would like to see a fully planned adventure from WD and a reformatting of adventure production from Games Workshop.

Among other things, there are a couple of large WFRP adventures going through the system as this Letters Page is being collated. The boost in the size of the magazine to 80 pages (haven't you read the editorial yet? I don't know why I bother) also means extra flexibility in the pattern of contents. Larger adventures are just one of the possibilities, and Jim Bambra and Phil Gallagher (two-thirds of the WFRP team) are already working on a 16 page something or other. They won't tell me what it is, though. Hmmm.

Sheenagh Antonis, Larne, Northern Ireland: Why?

Why are men in fantasy art allowed to wear plate armour, chainmail, etc, when women are only allowed the most improbable of metal plates which are too miniscule to make a tin tack?

I can suffer their totally exaggerated anatomy (after all, look at the men's muscles), but the armour is totally illogical.

The Voice of Doom, Glasgow: I'd just like to say that the main reason many females don't take up roleplaying is the image which you present. Imagine you were a female and you saw an enormous nude woman carrying a giant sword plastered across the front of a scenario/RPG magazine. You would probably be disgusted and put off by this image of women as the pawns of men. Is this really up to date with modern ideals?

Philip Nichol, Thornton Heath, Surrey: I am pleased to see the cover of WD88 is graced by the presence of a lady almost totally covered in metal armour. Now who said *White Dwarf* didn't cater for minority tastes?

One of the problems with overseas distribution is that it is often a month or two before the rest of the world finds out what has been annoying/provoking the British readers:

Alan Clark, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: On reading the Letters Page of WD86, I was slightly disturbed to note that a number of English gamers take the view that a *Spetsnaz* platoon parachuting into my back yard would be poetic justice. I understand and share their disgust with games such as *The Price of Freedom, Delta Force*, etc, but the backlash is going a bit far. These games (and they *are* only games) were not produced by the American people to propagate alarmist political views among RPG players; they were produced by companies that believed that the games would sell. If everyone ignores them, these games will quietly go away, and we Americans can stop booby-trapping our lawns, hiding our VCRs and anxiously watching the sky.

Raymond J Foldhazi, Taylors, South Carolina: I must express a degree of distress over certain opinions your readers have been shown to hold by their vitriolic tirades not only against certain role-playing games but against the peoples of the US. I must now state for the record that I am an American of mainly Hungarian/German/Polish decent, that I am not a deep-South redneck, and that I am proud to be a member of my much maligned society.

I am also proud to be an Anglophile. There is much to admire in many nations, but our allies of two world wars enjoy a special admiration. Therefore it saddens me to hear and read the currently fashionable anti-Americanisms from both the UK and France, and it is ironic that Germany and Japan, our erstwhile foes, seem to hold us in higher regard.

Thomas Esposito, Norristown, Pennsylvania: I was quite surprised by the uproar that *The Price of Freedom* elicited from your readers in WD86. None of the people who wrote in to complain seem to have played the game. Most seem to be horrified that such a game should simply exist. The question I ask is 'Why?'

I myself am an American conservative. I never would have considerd buying *Price* if it wasn't for all your anti-American balderdash disguised as distaste for a single game.

I would like all you Brits to know that we Yanks are all alike. We believe everything our government tells us. We are very stupid. We all sit around drinking moonshine whiskey and picking our toes. We believe that the Rooskies are going to invade tomorrow (maybe the day after). We all follow everything our President tells us. We are very stupid. We are all political reactionaries and religious fundamentalists. We are very, very stupid.

We are all buying *The Price of Freedom*. We are playing it until the Rooskies invade and we can play it for real. Yes, being an American is like playing *Paranoia* with real bullets.

Now, please, having balanced the books by printing these letters, no more on this subject...

And almost to finish:

Mark Lewis, Luton, Beds: Keep up the witty/offensive comments after the letters - it makes the Letters Page more interesting to read, and people who make stupid comments that can only do bad things for gaming deserve to be slagged off.

Douglas Thomson, Upper Smiddyseat, Aberdeenshire: In WD87 the Letters Page raises the point of your comments about letters. I think Richard Bourke must be among the minority of your readers. I for one sometimes enjoy reading your comments more than the letters. If I had any say in the matter, then I would rather have more of your comments and get rid of the totally stupid letters which babble on about balancing figures and such like. If you think letters like these are humourous and provide a good interlude, then you must have a pretty weird sense of humour. Surely it would be more worth your while printing decent comments about the hobby that people could argue over...

Unfortunately, there's no real skill in being offensive. Anybody can do it - as the mailbag proves every month. As to the general point of comments, letters are chosen so that there is something that needs a reply. That's the sum total of editing the Letters Page each month.

I think we've had this next bit before, about ***Judge Dredd****.*

Michael Dever, Brentwood, Essex: Lately *White Dwarf* has been like a scratched record, the same old thing almost every month. 'What is it?' you may well ask. It's *Call of Cthulhu!*

Why do I get the feeling that you can't please some of the people some of the time, let alone anything more ambitious...

Arguments manipulated by **Mike Brunton**

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14 Year Old wants penpals from California USA with possibilty of exchange. Contact, Stephen Fearon, 25 Linghope Place, Gowkthrapple, Wishaw, Scotland, ML2 0LJ.

Swap MERP, campaigns, scenarios, sourcebook, map, Car Wars, Crash City, Prince August moulds for Warhammer Supplements or Regiments of Renown.

Hate Reality? Wanted penpals from anywhere. Into RPGs, fantasy fiction and good music. Contact Neil Addison, 14 Sefton gardens, Aughton, Ormskirk, Lancashire, England, L39 6RZ.

Articles Needed for fantasy RPG zine. See your name in Letraset and get a free issue. Gosh. Mark Wilsher, 56 Croham Valley Rd, Croydon, Surrey.

Wanted Blood Bowl. Will swap D&D Basic set & FF 4+5 for it. Contact Ste, 19 Hill Rd, Barrow, LA14 4EZ. Tel 0229 22338.

Swap MERP, CoC, Runequest and supplements/scenarios for any figures/AD&D/White Dwarfs (1-39). Contact Carl, Farnham Common 4105 after 6pm.

17 Year Old seeks other FRPGers in Southampton area. Contact Shaun 0703 778080 after 6pm.

Experienced GM seeks players in the east of Southampton. Many games are available. Ring Southampton 438649. Given address and/or telephone number. Serious Roleplayers only.

Help Gamer (15) seeks AD&D players in NW Cheshire. Ring Justin on Kingsley 88549.

Roleplayers Wanted for the Warhammer campaign, the Enemy Within. No experience of the game needed. Contact Robert, 99 Lilyhill Rd, Bracknell, Berks. Tel 54759.

Swap Conan, MSHRPG and MSH scenarios for D&D, Paranoia and scenarios for JDRPG, Paranoia and D&D respectively. Contact Simon on 01 800 3862 after 5pm.

Wanted WD 1-15, 21, 23 and all Dragonlance merchandise. Contact Paul Jefferson, 13 St Nicholas St, Norton, Malton, N Yorkshire, YO17 9AQ.

Swap World of Greyhawk, Expert Rules and Modules for any Citadel boxed sets or single miniatures. Ring Lee on 061 7908162

23 Year Old Male, experienced DM/Player in D&D/AD&D needs to join a club or group. Contact Kev, 0225 708511, 9 Canon Square, Melksham, Wilts.

Southport same old story - RPGer (16, intelligent role-player) just moved here, looking for RPG club or people to start one. Phone Jeremy 65597 PLease!

Coventry Experienced DM (19) seeks players for new AD&D campaign. Also play most others. Contact John 0203 467286.

31 Year Old (venerable or senile?) seeks 'local' intelligent AD&D or MERP campaign to play at weekends. Phone Jeff 01 427 9658 (N/NW London).

CLUBS

Notices are free up to nine lines length, if drawn up to standard format (location, name, games, time, place, comments, contact). Extra lines cost £1.40 + VAT per line.

USK, GWENT
Knights In White Satin
Games: Everything
Time: Tuesday 7pm
Place: Usk Adult Education Centre
Comments: All welcome, especially GM's
Contact: Gareth Usk 2347; Russell Usk 3126; Chris Caerleon 422183

HARLOW, ESSEX
Dragonclaw RPG Club
Games: CoC, Battletech, any others
Time: Friday 6-10pm
Place: Pavillion, Nr Bush Fair Playbarn
Comments: All welcome, GM's especially
Contact: Anthony 0279 418177, Tom 0279 417774

OVERPELT, BELGIUM
Desperately Seeking Experience (New Club)
Games: AD&D, MERP, Rolemaster, etc
Time: tba
Place: tba
Comments: GMs & players welcome, preferably 16+, any sex
Contact: Bob Deblier, Bergeykseweg 12, B3583 Overpelt, 011 642435

LUTTERWORTH
Githyanki Annihilators RPG club
Games: AD&D, Traveller, Ringworld, JD & others
Time: 7-11pm Fridays
Place: Players houses
Comments: All welcome (any females?)
Contact: Lee Walker, 49 Greenacres Drive, Lutterworth, Leics, LE17 4TN 04555 2947

ISLE OF MAN
Northern Roleplaying Club
Games: MERP, CoC, Star Trek, Warhammer
Time: Fridays & Saturdays 6-11pm
Place: GM's or players houses
Comments: Any sex, 14-17, Free
Contact: Edward, Ramsey 815921 (after 6pm)

ALSAGER, CHESHIRE
Alsager Gamers
Games: D&D, AD&D, MERP, CoC, Warhammer, anything else
Time: 7-10pm, Thursdays
Place: Alsager Library
Comments: All welcome
Contact: Paul, 09363 5333 or John, 09363 5880, after 6pm

SURREY, SUSSEX, KENT, HANTS
South Coast Area Role-Players Asc
Games: All types, RPG, Board & Wargames
Time: Bi-annually, others as advertised
Place: Varies, as advertised
Comments: We run non-profit-making meets to promote gaming. Yearly membership £2, six newsletters, reduced admission.
Contact: SCARPA, Elm Lodge, Sylvan Way, Bognor Regis, W Sussex, phone - 0243 823006

BOLLINGTON
The RPG Group
Games: Current Bushido campaign, can play anything
Time: Thursdays 7pm
Place: Members homes
Comments: Any age, any sex, No hack & slayers
Contact: Simon 0625 74931

WOLVERHAMPTON
Penn Pyromaniacs
Games: AD&D, batletech, Traveller, any others
Time: tba
Place: GMs' & players' houses
Comments: 20p per week, Bring games along
Contact: Leon, PENN 332424 4.30-7pm

AYRSHIRE, KILWINNING
Followers of Chaos RPG Club
Games: WFRP, D&D, Bloodbowl, You bring it-we'll play it
Time: Either Tuesdays (7-11) and/or Saturdays
Place: tba
Comments: Players & GM's, Novice or Experienced 14+
Contact: Paul 0294 53488

PETERBOROUGH
Bretlon Barbarians
Games: MERP, Bushido, WFRP & Battle, anything
Time: Saturdays 9.30 onwards
Place: Bretlon Library
Comments: GM's & females please, All welcome
Contact: Jason 0773 330804

OSSETT
New Club Starting
Games: AD&D, MERP, Dr Who, GH, CoC
Time: Thursdays 7-10.30, Fridays 7-11
Place: Our own clubhouse
Comments: Would like to contact other groups, anybody 13+ welcome
Contact: Tommy (Wakefield) 271923

MARKET HARBOROUGH
MHRPG Club
Games: Almost all RPGs
Time: saturday or Sunday 2-5pm
Place: Players homes
Comments: 14+, beginners & girls welcome
Contact: Matthew, MH33226 after 5pm

LINGFIELD, SURREY
The Athlau Aliens
Games: Paranoia, AD&D, Warhammmer, etc
Time: at players convenience
Place: players homes
Comments: 12-15 years, M/F
Contact: Stuart, Smallfield 3549

SHREWSBURY
Shrewsbury's 1st RPG Club
Games: Any RPG - Suggestions?
Time: Friday 7-9pm (can change)
Place: 34 Sutton Lane, Shrewsbury
Comments: Subs - 25p non-member, 15p members, £1 mem (12+)
Contact: Richard Morcombe, SHREW 66923

SW LEEDS
The 2-Players Needed Club
Games: MERP, Paranoia, RQ, JD, NO D&D!
Time: Sat 12-4pm, Tue or Thu 6-9pm
Place: is a type of fish
Comments: Age 13-16, either sex, dedicated existing campaigns. No powergamers, hackslayers, rules lawyers or conservatives
Contact: Karl 0532 56655 or Adey 572789

SUFFOLK
Fantasy Rolers
Games: Warhammer, AD&D, etc
Time: Depends, (Saturdays/Sundays)
Place: Members Houses
Comments: Anyone welcome M/F, 11+
Contact: Kevin, Lowestoft 3069 after 6pm

NEWQUAY, CORNWALL
Dragonbolts Arena
Games: D&D, Expert, AD&D all in one
Time: Mondays and Fridays evenings from 7pm (Sept-May)
Place: DM's House
Comments: Males only, 18-21, must be mature and like Monty Python
Contact: Dragonbolt, The Bungalow, Carisbrooke Hotel, 5 Alexandra Rd, Porth, Newquay, Cornwall, TR7 3ND

NEWCASTLE
Games: Anything realistic
Time: anytime
Place: 'White Knights', Spittal Tongues, Newcastle
Comments: teenagers only
Contact: J Thornton, 'White Knights', Spittal Tongues, Newcastle, Tyne & Wear

NEWCASTLE (again)
Heaton Role Playing Society
Games: Almost anything, bring it along!
Time: Sundays 2-10pm, Mondays 6-10pm
Place: The Heaton Centre, Trewhitt Rd, Newcastle, Tyne & Wear
Comments: 50p per year subs, ladies welcome, no more munchkins!
Contact: Dave Thompson (HRPS), at above address.

LOWESTOFT, SUFFOLK
Primal Chaos RPG Club
Games: Absolutely anything
Time: Probably on Saturdays between 2-6pm
Place: tba (when enough people apply)
Comments: Players desperately needed! 15+
Contact: A Ward, 29 Beresford Rd, Lowestoft or ring Rod, 518340

DORCHESTER
Dream Warriors
Games: Too long to list
Time: 7-10pm Wednesday evenings
Place: GM's or players houses
Comments: 16+, any sex, must be consistant
Contact: Either Jason 0305 65153 or Kevin 93 20371

GREATER MANCHESTER
Cellar Club
Games: AD&D, Traveller, CoC, Ringworld, Jorune, WFRP etc
Time: Saturday/Sunday
Place: GM's homes
Comments: Facilities and willingness to play most quality RPGs. No frothers, wallies or time wasters. 16+ only.
Contact: Sean Masterson, 33 Park Rd, Stretford, manchester, M32 8FE (please send SAE). Be seeing you.

HORNCHURCH, ESSEX
Hornchurch RPG Club
Games: Almost all major RPGs
Time: Sat/Sun 11am
Place: Players or GM's houses
Comments: 14+ age group
Contact: Paul on Hornchurch 0402 445183 after 5pm

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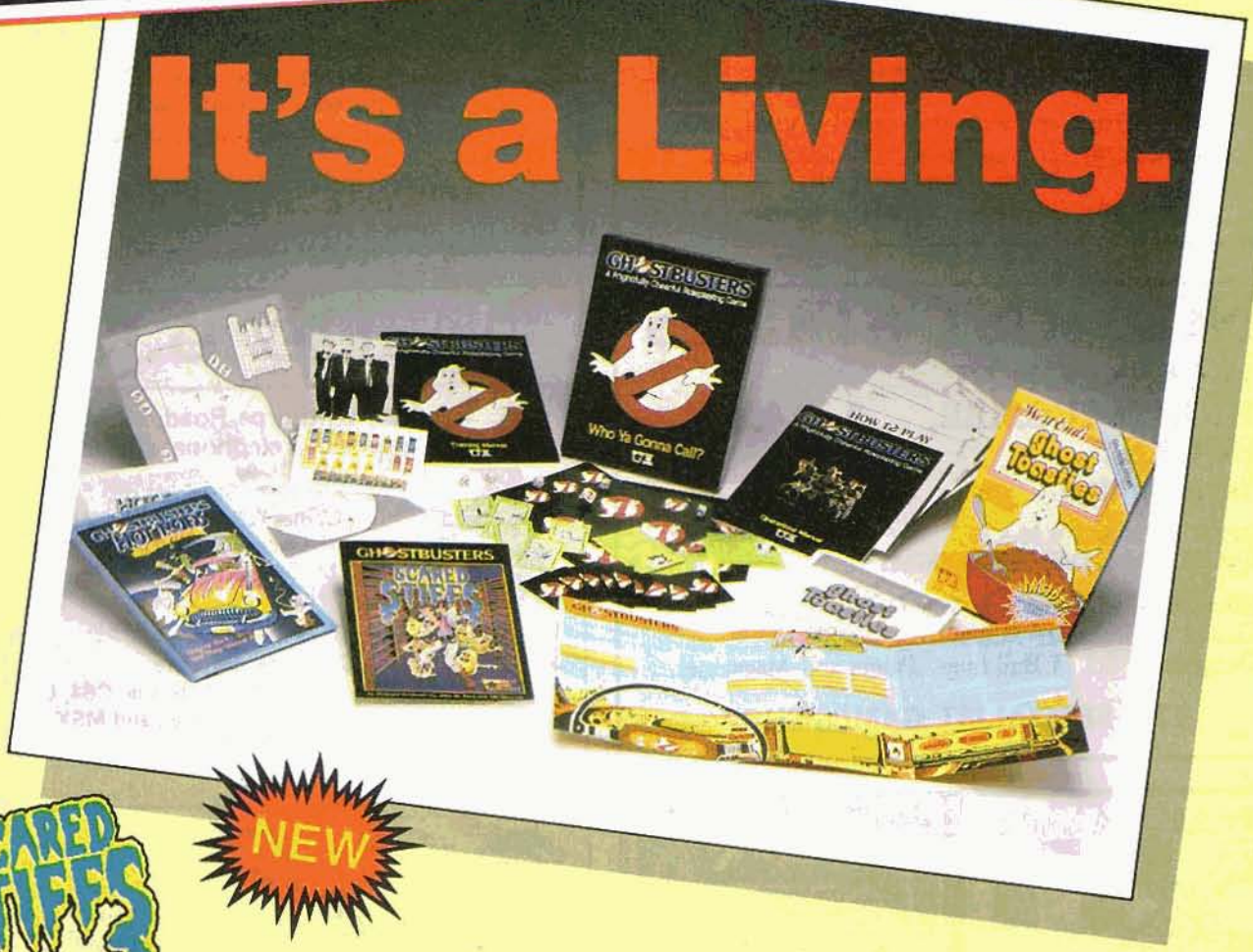

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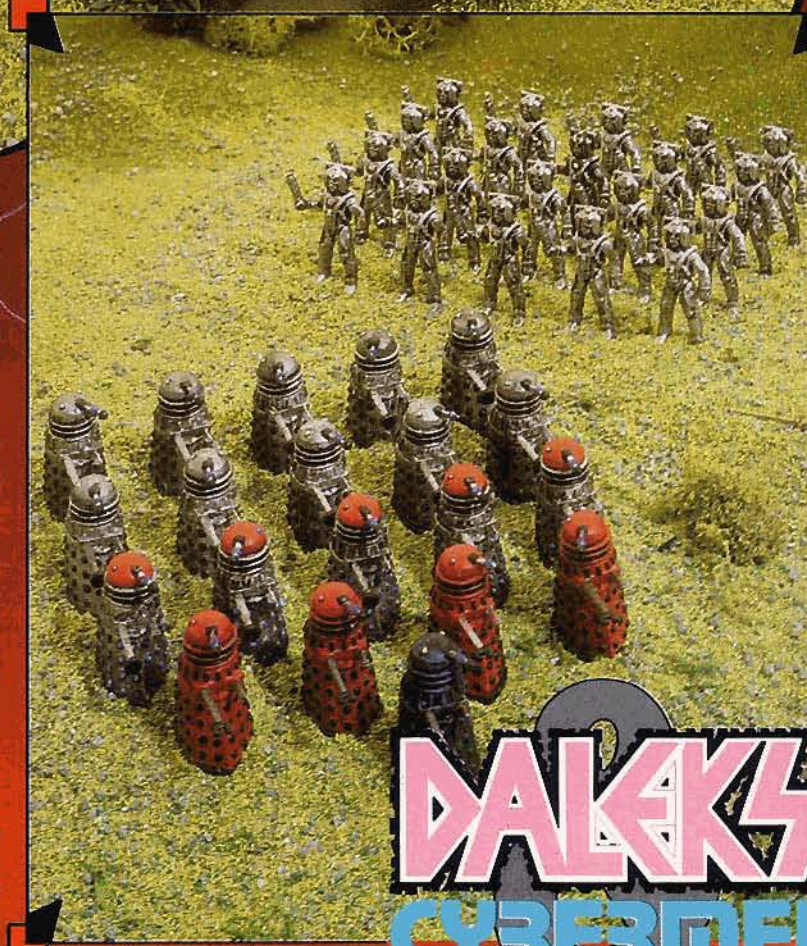

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